

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS
Minutes February 23, 2016**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, February 23, 2016.

Present were Chair Wayne Harrall, Vice Chair Bev Wall, Secretary Dave Van Dyke, Commissioners; Scott Conners, Mark Prein, Bill Culhane and Doug Kochneff. Also present were Township Attorney Ross Leisman and Planning Assistant Kara Hammond.

1. Approve minutes of January 26, 2016.

Scott Conners, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to approve the minutes as they stand with no edits.
Motion approved unanimously.

2. Public Hearing - Continental Properties - Request to amend the existing HC-PUD to include the proposed residential site plan (Springs at Knapp's Corner) consisting of 12, two-story apartment buildings on 28.5 acre parcels located at 2500-2570 East Beltline Ave NE.

Wayne Harrall explained there are actually three individual items that will be addressed under this item; the Public Hearing will be held on all 3 and the public can address any or all items if they chose to do so.

Erik Hahn & Bridget Weasler representing Continental Properties, and Cheryl Scales with progressive a&e, gave a power point presentation;

- ✦ developed apartment buildings over 16 states
- ✦ 3800 new households in Kent County looking to rent in the near future
- ✦ 950-1200/unit/month
- ✦ new high quality product and an option that is not currently available in the area
- ✦ 1/3 of the site will stay in its original state
- ✦ modified plan and reduced footprint in order to fall in line with current HC-PUD zoning and density
- ✦ evaluating the feasibility of Spectrum to grant Continental an easement to the north of the property for pedestrian access
- ✦ new proposal of 248 is approximately a 13% reduction
- ✦ created a greater buffer to the homes on Dunnigan; 300 ft. buffer from the buildings to the right of way line
- ✦ goal is to have an agreement with Spectrum before coming back to the Site Plan Review Committee on a pedestrian walk access/easement
- ✦ able to preserve a decent section of vegetation (as demonstrated in site elevation 'A-A' and 'B-B')
- ✦ proposing significant buffer; for every 100 linear ft. providing large deciduous and evergreen trees
- ✦ 65 ft. increased proposed landscape buffer
- ✦ in the process of the traffic study but numbers significantly declined with the reduction of density/buildings
- ✦ 28 studio units (11%); 525-623 sq. ft.
- ✦ land use complies with current zoning, reduction in density (9.8 units/acre), buffer concerns have been addressed, minimize planned retaining walls and significantly increase the buffer to Dunnigan

* benefit to neighboring neighborhood -- regarding the utility and lift station

Scott Conners asked if there was any further review of the applicant looking at access to north to alleviate some traffic. Erik Hahn said they are currently working with MDOT and stated they do not feel that opening the development to the north to a health care facility would go with the integrity of their brand, explained from Continentals aspect that it would be a departure from the brand (opening up the development). Hahn stated it is a gated community and they do not foresee any issue with the traffic.

Attorney Ross Leisman gave the legal report.

Mark Prein asked the applicant about the proposed fence along the east side of the property and if the applicant has any procedure protocol if the entrance/exit gate malfunctions. Erik Hahn stated they are currently showing a sight proof fence and noted specifically they had not planned on a fence along the east side, but thinking they will have to consider putting along the east due to the location of the pond and safety reasons. Hahn also said they do have procedures if the gate breaks and stated at peak traffic times the gates usually stay open to avoid backups on busy roads and right of ways. Wayne Harrall asked the applicant what the distance is from the gate to the curb line on the East Beltline. Hahn stated approximately 200 ft., and noted they try to do at least a throat length.

Dave Van Dyke asked how the applicant has the property set up in case of an emergency and having first responders respond. Erik Hahn said they have various ways of allowing access for first responders and it really is up to the local municipality. Van Dyke stated he wants to make sure that the Township cannot be held liable if any damage happens to the gates during an emergency response. Erik Hahn said that is understandable and suggested making sure something is in the ordinance relieving the Township of any cost occurred due to damage in an emergency situation.

Wayne Harrall suggested connecting the pedestrian access to the south and as it starts approaching the East Beltline, moving it away from Spectrum. Erik Hahn said that is something they have to work through and the second item they need to address is whether Spectrum will approve an easement or not. Hahn stated he intends to seriously look at this and move forward but needs a lot of other factors to fall into place for this to be monetarily feasible.

Wayne Harrall asked about the detention basin on Dunnigan. Cheryl Scales said they have been working with Moore & Bruggink to see what the best plan of attack will be, stating they have not gotten to that detail yet, just talking about what could work.

Mark Prein asked about the proposed landscape and the trees on the east side. Eric Hahn stated they have not submitted a landscape plan yet but they are proposing trees every 100 linear ft. to ensure a significant buffer to the property along the east side of the development.

Dave Van Dyke suggested having a few more walks connecting the proposed walkways between buildings; 2&20, 12&7, 9&8.

Wayne Harrall stated the applicant has done a great job with moving the buildings (in regards to the houses along Dunnigan) and keeping the natural vegetation and suggested having more than a decorative fence to help buffer the east side.

Mark Prein, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to open the Public Hearing (on all three items) at 7:52 pm.

Motion approved unanimously.

Wayne Harrall stated there were numerous letters submitted from residents and companies.

Jeff Hill, 3611 Arbor Chase Ct NE

- ▣ Resident since 2003
- ▣ Generally in favor of the proposed project; the lower density, the buffering along Dunnigan
- ▣ Wanted to bring up the logistics/form of the project; developer compared their development to the ones in Cascade & Ada -- fine line between higher quality verses just another apartment building
- ▣ Adding just a few more treatments will be worth the cost, brown and tan is not appealing, stonework is something that is more prevalent in this area
- ▣ Path along Spectrum may actually make it worse, just something to think about with kids crossing, etc...

Ben Hammond, 3451 Mason View Dr NE

- ▣ Lives in the Preserve and in favor of the lift station
- ▣ Detail and stone work is a must -- need a better exterior and fencing details
- ▣ Asked about the plan for the gated community -- where will the kids go -- jamming all these people in to a small area with no recreational space

Dan Banister, 2491 & 2493 Dunnigan Ave NE

- ▣ Asked if by taking on the zoning of the HC-PUD if he would be jeopardizing his rights, going from R-1 to the PUD -- regarding the buffer (misinterpreted the zoning ordinance)
- ▣ Pushing for a density significantly more than allowed, wants to know how and who is determining the usable acres
- ▣ Has a problem with the developer determining their density (that it is not coming from the Township)
- ▣ Given the density proposed feels that the buffer should be increased

Amy Abare, 3456 Mason Ridge Dr NE

- ▣ Licensed real estate broker
- ▣ Talking about the population and addition of kids and how it eventually will increase the resident's taxes because they will have to build a new school and up the millage...
- ▣ Concerned about crime rate -- increased crime rate comes with apartments
- ▣ Value of their home -- property taxes going up while their home value goes down
- ▣ Wants to see more businesses/offices, not more houses

Martin Andree, 3990 4 Mile Rd NE

- ▣ Echo Dan Banister's concerns
- ▣ All items seem to be dictated by the applicant vs the Planning Commission
- ▣ Would like to see the Planning Commission hold the applicant accountable for the proper calculations

Julie Powers, 2743 Arbor Chase Dr NE

- ▣ Question about the residential properties on Dunnigan and if they are approved as HC-PUD could they potentially be developed into businesses in the future

Wayne Harrall replied that with the setbacks of those properties there would be nothing allowed there but residential.

Scott Conners, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 8:21 pm.
Motion approved unanimously.

Erik Hahn explained the calculations to the Planning Commissioners and backed their findings. Hahn stated they are committed to this plan, once they get construction bids they are confident the development will begin and do nothing but thrive. Hahn replied to a resident's comment stating they are expecting 0.05 (5%) children per household; roughly 12 school aged children will be residing in the proposed development. Hahn explained that if the demographics pointed to the development having more kids they would provide playgrounds and more children friendly landscaping, but that is not what the demographics are showing for this location. Hahn also noted they are a tax paying entity and will be paying significant taxes on the development. Hahn said they can review their aesthetics and make some adjustments, although this is a 'Class-A', not 'luxury' apartment complex.

Scott Conners stated he feels that there will be more kids than they are predicting as there are so many people who would want to move here just for the school district alone.

Dave Van Dyke talked about the exterior and would like to see some of the textures changed and upgraded a little more to fit closer to the aesthetics of the other comparable apartment complexes. Van Dyke stated he would like to see the walkways meet the requirements of the Township's non-motorized trails and possibly, eventually, work towards the goal of connecting as many of the trails as they can.

Wayne Harrall commented on the concern about connecting to Dunnigan stating it will never happen. Harrall said he is not a fan of only one access point, but it makes sense for this proposed development. Harrall added that there is an emergency access being provided if need be, and said with what the applicant is proposing MDOT will most likely approve it.

Scott Conners touched on the applicant's comment about their "brand", and explained he is still not convinced this is the right spot for the proposed development. Conners stated he still has some concerns about aesthetics, believes it is a bad idea with the emergency access on the Beltline that is not actually an access drive, needs to see something on lighting especially relating to the east side and would like more time to review the grading plan.

Dave Van Dyke asked Cheryl Scales about the emergency access drive; agreed it could be a problem if someone turns in thinking it is an actual drive then is stuck with nowhere to go on a busy street like the East Beltline, and suggested moving the emergency drive to the north, past the main entrance. Van Dyke said he thinks they are heading in the right direction on things but still needs more, of everything. Van Dyke also suggested having the Township Engineer double check the actual acreage, including the wetlands, to tie into buildable units, etc.

Dave Van Dyke said if MDOT feels comfortable with one access point/drive for the development then he does not see an issue with it, as long as there is enough stacking room from the gate to the road. Van Dyke did state that he would like to see in the Ordinance that there is a section that states if the volume of traffic becomes significant the gates must stay open during certain peak times. Van Dyke suggested the applicant consider two lanes, or at least wide enough lanes, so a resident can go by and traffic does not back up onto a busy road.

The Commissioners compiled a list of items for the applicant to address consisting of;

- ‡ Exterior treatments (stone, fire chases, bay windows)
- ‡ Trail easement on preserve property

- ‡ Landscaping around pond
- ‡ Sidewalk on Dunnigan
- ‡ Nicer fence (aluminum/decorative/wrought iron)
- ‡ Lighting
- ‡ Landscaping
- ‡ Grading plan
- ‡ Deed restriction
- ‡ 10 ft. trail and asphalt (move away from existing facility)
- ‡ Confirm calculations
- ‡ Transportation (traffic study, entry)
- ‡ Storm water (calculations, operations)
- ‡ Sewer up Dunnigan to Mason Ridge
- ‡ Dedicated gate (lane) for guest traffic
- ‡ Gates -- if problem with opening during certain peak hours --

Scott Conners, seconded by **Bev Wall**, moved to table (all three items including) the request to amend the site plan until more descriptive plans, on all aforementioned items be submitted by the applicant.

Motion approved unanimously.

3. General Public Comment.

No residents spoke during Public Comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.



David A. Van Dyke, Secretary