

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS  
Minutes of the October 28, 2008 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, October 28, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Present were Chair Susan Molhoek, Vice-chair Stephen C. Fry, Secretary Wayne Harrall, Commissioners Michael J Fuller, Edward J. Robinette, and Beverly Wall. Also present were Township Planning Director Richard Sprague Jr, Township Attorney James Brown, and Planning/Zoning Clerical Assistant Robin Rothley. Absent was David VanDyke.

**1. Approve minutes of the regular meeting of September 23, 2008.**

The minutes submitted for approval were not the complete version.

**Wayne Harrall**, seconded by **Michael Fuller**, moved to table the minutes until the November meeting. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**2. Public Hearing – Aquinas College Special Land Use request for student housing.**

Ted Lott, representing Aquinas College, explained that they have reviewed a number of ideas for use of the Brown Center. They are requesting to be allowed to convert the building from classrooms and offices to student housing. Past uses for the building have been a single family home, housing for Priests, and currently offices and classrooms.

If approved any modifications to the building would primarily be inside. There would be an elevator installed which would go on the outside of the building. There are excess of 90 parking spaces which would be adequate for the students and any staff so there are no plans to add spaces.

Sue Molhoek inquired about any common areas in the building. Ted Lott stated that they plan to reclaim areas that have not been renovated from the original design such as the entry way, staircase, and dining area.

Wayne Harrall asked about the existing maintenance building on the property. Ted Lott stated that there would be no changes to that building and it is not included in this request.

Planning Director Rick Sprague gave a brief review of the Township Engineer's report; no issues noted.

Rick Sprague gave an overview of his staff report.

- The building exceeds setback requirements for the zoning district.
- No additional landscaping would be needed.
- Parking is sufficient to accommodate student parking and staff.
- No new lighting is proposed at this time. Any new lighting would be required to meet Township Lighting Standards.
- There was a typo on the memo; the maximum capacity would be 54 students.

Steve Fry, seconded by Wayne Harrall moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:08 p.m.. Motion passed unanimously.

AJ Birkbeck, 2093 Robinson Rd, said he is the home to the immediate east and his bedroom window is the closest to the modifications.

He asked what the current zoning is for the property. Rick Sprague explained that the zoning is R-1, Single Family Residential, but schools are allowed uses with a Special Land Use.

AJ Birkbeck said his primary concern is not so much with this request but what could potentially be added to the site in the future. He has not had any contact with Aquinas regarding this request and would like to know if they have any future plans to expand the student housing on the site.

Bill Peterson, 2089 Robinson Rd, concurred with Mr Birkbeck. Brown Center has been a good neighbor up to this point but he is concerned that 54 students could change that. He asked if a condition could be put on the property for no future expansion.

As there was no one else in the audience wishing to comment; Steve Fry, seconded by Wayne Harrall moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:12 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Sue Molhoek noted that both neighbors have voiced concerns for future expansion plans. Bill Shefferly, Vice President for Finance & Operations at Aquinas, said at this time there are no plans for future expansion. The staff & faculty offices have been moved; Emeritus College classes are the only use currently at Brown Center.

Wayne Harrall verified that the elevator would be installed on the exterior of the building. Ted Lott stated it would be on the east side.

The Planning Commissioners decided if there are any lighting changes staff could review for them compliance.

**Steve Fry**, seconded by **Mike Fuller**, moved to approve the request for a Special Land Use to allow student housing based on the Ordinance submitted by the Township Attorney with the following changes:

- 2 (e) insert “as reviewed by Planning Staff” behind “appropriate” and remove “to the use”.
- 2(f) insert “any new lighting shall meet Township Zoning Ordinance requirements” behind “maintained” and remove, “except”.
- 1(l) shall read “Final site plan and building elevator shall be reviewed by staff”.

**Motion Passed Unanimously.**

**3. Discussion: Catholic Secondary Schools amended plans.**

Mark Wrona, representing Catholic Secondary Schools, introduced the request. He outlined the changes that have been made to the plan that will be discussed.

Steve Passinault, Catholic Central Principal, outlined the Policy changes that have been implemented for the site in order to manage it more effectively.

- After meeting with the neighbors they decided to change the hours of operations to end at 10:00 p.m. in order to have enough time for clean up after events.
- Athletic Director, Todd Kolster, will notify the neighbors along Leffingwell if the parking lot at KISD would be utilized.
- They heard the neighbors concerns regarding vehicles parking along Leffingwell loud and clear and have installed additional No Parking signs. They also will send reminders to Catholic Central families not to park on the street.
- They have included in the written policy how trash removal will be handled.
- Emergency contact numbers have been provided to the neighbors and are included in the policy to voice concerns.
- They have implemented a new neighborhood service program. Student athletes will be available one day in the summer and one day in the spring to help neighbors with yard work.
- They will not seek to rent the facilities as a revenue source to outside non Diocesan users.

The applicants have met with some of the neighbors and addressed some of their concerns. They have changed the light deflector, added the signs on Leffingwell, and set up a band practice rotation so not every practice is on the site.

Steve Passinault presented a handout outlining the annual usage of the facility.

Mark Wrona outlined the document with attendance for this season's football games, which was the first season in the OK Gold conference, and the number of parking spaces that would be required for each game. The average game would require 812 spaces and there are 711 on site, the additional 100 would be directed to the lot at New Life Church across Knapp St. They don't believe the parking lot at Kent Intermediate School District will be needed but there is an existing path leading from that lot to Leffingwell for pedestrians to access.

Mark Wrona discussed LEEDS which encourages the use of grass parking areas and shared parking to reduce paved areas.

Mark Wrona discussed Varsity Basketball attendance; the number may change with the new conference. They don't plan to hold games on the site for at least another four years,

but would like to include Varsity Basketball in the request to save them from returning for that approval.

Mark Wrona discussed several other stadiums with limited on site parking and the ways those issues have been resolved. Most use the County Sheriff's Departments to direct pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Sue Molhoek explained that those situations were different because the stadiums were on school sites.

Wayne Harrall asked about neighbor's reactions to the additional information provided. Mark Wrona said that four households were represented at the neighbor meeting; there were many misunderstandings that they were able to clear up.

Wayne Harrall suggested that Sgt. Steve Dabkowski describe to the Planning Commission how he would suggest moving traffic. Sgt. Dabkowski explained that his job is to coordinate special events; they can clear parking lots quickly and smoothly. They do this a lot and are very good at it.

Sgt. Dabkowski described how they would direct traffic from each parking lot to prevent pile ups; they also have a key for the light box so they can adjust the timing for the traffic light at Knapp and Leffingwell. He estimated this request would require three officers, 3 vehicles, and one reserve officer.

Wayne Harrall suggested that people may park at the KISD lot even though the other lots were not yet full. Would there be officers available for that lot as well? Sgt. Dabkowski stated that there would be an officer standing at the walkway and if there were problems in the lot they could have a reserve officer patrol the lot during events.

Rick Sprague gave an overview of his staff report:

- Township Engineers did not submit a report for this request at this time.
- The applicant discussed his questions regarding Varsity Basketball.
- The existing fence along the west property line is inadequate for its intended purpose; it should be replaced with a taller new one.
- The applicant provided the hours of operation in their policy that was submitted.

Bev Wall said that the capacity for the stadium is 3,250 and the applicant is suggesting that there could be as many as 5,000 attendees; where would the additional people sit? Mark Wrona said that they would stand in the plaza areas.

Bev Wall asked if they had considered combining the Track & Field stadium with the Football stadium. Mark Wrona said that they had considered many alternatives before deciding on this location. The reasons the other locations were not pursued were; the lights would be closer to the neighbor's homes, parking would be further removed from the stadium, and the field orientation for sun and wind.

Sue Molhoek said that because this is a work session there would be no action taken on the request at this time. She thanked the applicant for their presentation.

**4. Discussion: Zoning Ordinance Amendments.**

Rick Sprague, Township Planner, introduced Township Attorney Jim Brown who is in attendance to answer questions that the Planning Commissioners may have regarding the previously discussed Zoning Ordinance Amendments.

Rick Sprague explained that Dave VanDyke, who is absent tonight, had some concerns with wording in Section 25.2.3 regarding “building envelope”. He believes it should address setbacks or minimum distance between buildings instead of building envelope because this could affect density.

Jim Brown pointed out that the section refers to a “Condominium Unit” not a “Site Condo” and described the differences between the two. He explained that condominium units are located on a single parcel in a PUD so the location of buildings can be altered on each individual basis. Site Condos are on individual parcels so a required distance between buildings would have to be included in the conventional Zoning Section of the Ordinance.

**Sexually Oriented Business Discussion:**

Sue Molhoek asked for clarification under Section 4.18.a; where it reads “when several of them are concentrated under certain circumstances”. Jim Brown said that part of the sentence could easily be taken out of the amendment. The Planning Commissioners discussed the issue and the consensus was to remove that part out.

Jim Brown assured the Planning Commissioners that the Ordinance has been derived from actual court cases; Freedom of Speech is not being prohibited.

**Mineral Removal Discussion:**

Rick Sprague said that the Planning Commission believes the Township Engineer should determine the amount for a letter of credit or performance bond. Jim Brown explained that ultimately the decision is the Planning Commission’s; although they can consult the Township Engineer.

**Manufactured Housing Discussion:**

Jim Brown explained that he has sent the amendments to this Section to the Manufactured Housing Commission and it is on the November 8, 2008 agenda for review.

Steve Fry asked how long it typically takes for a response. Jim Brown said it can take anywhere from one week to three months.

The Planning Commissioners, Jim Brown, and Rick Sprague discussed holding Public Hearings for the amendments and it was decided to hold out until January so they can do them all in one meeting.

**5. Public Comment.**

Rick Sprague asked the Planning Commission if they had any further direction for the Catholic Secondary Schools request.

Peter Baldwin, A.M.D.G. Architects, said they hoped to be more specific to help alleviate concerns of the neighbors and the Planning Commissioners. In the spirit of a work session they would like to know if there are any issues the Commissioners would like addressed before they come in for a Public Hearing.

Wayne Harrall asked if the applicants have shown visuals of the Grand Rapids Christian athletic field to the neighbors so they can get an idea of lighting for the field. Mark Wrona said that the lights are a factor and showed a display which shows very little spillage. Steve Fry commented that no light would spill on neighbor's properties from those lights. Mark Wrona added, the pine trees on Leffingwell have grown up which would also block lighting.

Ed Robinette said he likes the added landscaping.

Mark Wrona stated that there is 40% more parking spaces added to the site. Ed Robinette asked if there is a gap in the fence leading to Knapp Charter Academy. Mark Wrona said there was and a walking path will be added from that parking lot to the field.

Ste Fry said that placement of this type of field is very important; they have to take wind and sun directions into consideration.

**6. Update from Township Planning Director.**

Rick Sprague said that the Catholic Secondary Schools will be on the November agenda for a Public Hearing and so far that is the only item on the agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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Wayne A. Harrall – Secretary