

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting of the Plainfield Charter Township Planning Commission was held at Township Hall on February 28, 2006.

Members present: Marie Kessler, Chair; Leora Godfrey, Vice Chair; Vic Matthews, Secretary; Scott Corder, Gary Gerber, and Robert Heindrichs. Also present was Peter Elam, Assistant Planner. Absent was Ray Holland.

1. Approve Agenda

Chair Kessler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and introduced the agenda.

Commissioner Corder, supported by Commissioner Gerber, moved to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Approve Consent Agenda

- A.) Approve Minutes of January 10, 2006**
- B.) Approve Minutes of February 14, 2006**
- C.) Schedule a Public Hearing date for March 28th. for proposed amendment to the Plainfield Charter Township Zoning Ordinance, regarding outside Services in Commercial Districts.**

Chair Kessler announced the Consent Agenda and shared that staff asked that the approval of the Minutes of the Special Combined Session of the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Township Board held on February 7, 2006 be added to the Consent Agenda.

Commissioner Godfrey, supported by Commissioner Corder, moved to approve the Consent Agenda including the Minutes of January 10, 2006, February 7, 2006, and February 14, 2006 subject to minor corrections in grammar and spelling.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. **Gezon Motors, Inc., Site Plan Review, 3985 Plainfield Avenue**
Mary Gezon or AJ Veneklasen, Christopher Sholl

Chair Kessler requested that Secretary Matthews read the application submitted by the applicant AJ Veneklasen, Inc., 5000 Kendrick Avenue, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49512 on behalf of Gezon Motors, 3985 Plainfield Avenue. Contact person is Mary Gezon. The applicant was requesting site plan approval for site improvements and expansion of the existing buildings. Improvements included an addition to the east building (Nissan Dealership) for additional sales area along with other renovations that included the removal of an existing drive-thru. Improvements to the north building were to be used for bodywork and detailing. The façade and overall exterior appearance of the buildings were also to be updated.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Chris Sholl, Project Manager from A.J. Veneklasen Inc., who stated that the project consisted of additions and renovations to three block and brick buildings. Among the additions and renovations proposed in the prepared plans are the following:

- A.) The West Building (Volkswagen and Mitsubishi Dealerships) would receive an upgrade to the exterior of the building.
- B.) The East Building (Nissan Dealership) is to receive a 5,270 square foot renovation to eliminate the existing drive-thru; a 1,065 square foot addition along the west wall for single car service lane and a 545 square foot addition at the southwest corner for a new main entrance.
- C.) The North Building is to receive a 5,624 square foot addition to support the detailing shop.

Mr. Sholl explained that the exterior of the buildings had not been improved since 1994 and the proposed improvements will enhance the overall appearance and function of the site. The proposed improvements will allow for additional employment. Currently there are 39 employees with a potential of 50 or more, once the improvements are in place.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Peter Elam who stated that staff had reviewed the plans and noted that the proposed improvements would enhance the overall appearance and function of the site. The site is almost entirely paved. Staff will work with the property owner to add landscaping along Plainfield Avenue frontage within the vehicle display area and along the frontage of each building. The applicant was not requesting approval of the sign package. Signs will be looked at on an individual basis.

Chair Kessler recognized Commissioner Matthews who led discussion regarding parking and the layout of vehicles on the property and the traffic flow throughout the site. It was confirmed that the chain-link fence would stay and that the gravel area behind the Nissan Dealership would be paved for employee parking and service.

Commissioner Corder wondered if it were possible to create more green-space not only along Plainfield Avenue but also along Hunsberger Avenue; was the entire pavement needed? Ms. Mary Gezon responded that, if anything, the site needed more pavement/parking area. She explained that the manufacturer provides parking guidelines based on the units in operation as well as projections for sales. For example, Nissan sales increased 10.8% and because the manufacturer is adding two new models, the projection is for 12% to 15% growth this year. There will be a "Big Nissan Promotion in March". We really need as much parking as possible.

Commissioner Corder stated that it was great to hear they were doing well! Dumpsters, wall pack lighting, pole lighting and signage were also discussed. Ms. Gezon explained that the existing signage is no longer in compliance with the image the dealerships wanted to portray. She was working with City Sign Erectors and the Township to update the signage. The number of signs would be going down as well as the size of the pole signs. The light package for the signs would also be less obtrusive.

Commissioner Heindrichs applauded the proposed facelift and reminded the applicants that additional landscaping would complement and enhance the new building facades. He appreciated the proposed prep areas coming out away from the residential neighborhood.

Commissioner Godfrey liked the idea of using daylilies and the verbal commitment of working with Mr. Fischer to provide additional trees and shrubbery. The new facilities and update will be an excellent improvement to the area.

Commissioner Gerber led discussion regarding the overhead doors and the parking calculations. It was confirmed that the final overhead door count had not been determined and that the parking calculations were more than sufficient.

Chair Kessler requested that Secretary Matthews read the proposed conditions if the project were approved as follows:

1. The applicant shall provide a landscaping plan for approval by the Community Development Department.
2. The applicant shall provide screening of the dumpster(s) as determined to be necessary by the Community Development Department.
3. The existing sidewalks along Plainfield Avenue and Hunsberger Avenue shall be inspected and repaired as determined by the Township Engineer.
4. The applicant shall notify the Water Department Director prior to paving the area of "new bit.pvmt." between the Nissan Dealership and Plainfield Avenue.

Commissioner Heindrichs, supported by Commissioner Godfrey, moved to approve the site plan as submitted for Gezon Motors, 3985 Plainfield Avenue subject to the conditions listed.

Motion carried unanimously.

**4. Creative Control Solutions, Site Plan Review, Chris VanDoeselaar
943 West River Center Drive, True North Architecture**

Chair Kessler requested that Secretary Matthews read the application submitted by the applicant, True North Architecture, 6250 Jupiter Avenue, Suite B, Belmont, Michigan 49306. The project name is Creative Control Solutions and contact person is Chris VanDoeselaar. The applicant is requesting site plan approval to construction an 8,000 square foot building located in the West River Business Park, 943 West River Center Drive (Lot 10).

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. VanDoeselaar from True North Architecture. He explained the proposed building was a pre-engineered structure. Mr. VanDoeselaar provided a narrative regarding Creative Control Solutions.

Creative Control Solutions is owned by Andy Duley and Thomas Cruttenden, electrical engineers who custom design equipment for the manufacturing industry. The primary focus of the company is design and custom machinery built through various machine shops. They assemble and provide the electrical and the automated controls. They also do the on site installation and assist in site implementation. Creative Control Solutions are constructing their own building because they anticipate additional growth in the next five years.

The proposed building would be mainly warehousing with 1,200 square feet of office space. The proposed building plans allowed accommodations for a future 4,000 square foot addition to the building when needed. The front façade would be stone and brick to dress up the building. The plan is to begin construction in May or June and occupy the building by October 1st.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Elam who shared that the proposed light industrial type of business would fit nicely into the industrial park. The proposed development site plan was straightforward and based on review, staff has determined that typical site plan issues such as lighting, landscaping and signage have been adequately addressed. Two conditions were suggested. Mr. Elam explained the condition regarding providing a favorable Letter of Map Revision from FEMA prior to the issuance of a building permits. He shared that FEMA is in the middle of a map modernization program that was scheduled to be completed in March or April of this year.

Commissioner Corder suggested that the gated, enclosed dumpster be constructed of masonry materials allowing for a longer lasting appeal, and if possible, the materials for construction match the proposed building. Discussion was held in regards to cross access agreements and if a service road were needed for this particular development. Parking in front of the building was also discussed and it was confirmed that Assistant Fire Chief, Steve McKellar, had requested (at the Development Review meeting) the area in front of the building be paved to allow access for fire trucks to be able to get to the back of the building. It was also confirmed that the berm along the White Pine Trail would mostly be left unchanged except for cleaning up the drainage swale.

Commissioners Heindrichs, Godfrey, Gerber and Matthews had no additional questions regarding the proposed site plan and welcomed the new business to the area.

Chair Kessler requested that Secretary Matthews read the proposed conditions of approval:

1. The applicant and/or property owner shall notify the Water Department prior to paving the driveway. (The Water Department must mark and adjust the value box which will be in the paved area.)

2. The applicant shall provide a favorable Letter of Map Revision from FEMA prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Commissioner Gerber, supported by Commissioner Heindrichs, moved to approve the site plan as presented subject to the conditions listed.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. **Amendment to the Belmont Farms P.U.D., (Sign Package)**
True North Architecture

Chair Kessler requested that Secretary Matthews read the application submitted by True North Architecture, 6250 Jupiter Avenue, Suite B, in the Belmont Farms P.U.D. The applicants were requesting a sign package amendment to the existing P.U.D. for freestanding development signs.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Mark McDowell from True North Architecture, who explained that his company owned three buildings in the Belmont Farms P.U.D.; two office buildings adjacent to Jupiter Avenue and a retail building behind the office buildings. He was requesting approval to amend the existing P.U.D. to allow for construction of a modified monument sign/pylon sign on the corner of Belmont Center Drive and Jupiter Avenue to provide signage opportunities for the retail tenants. The architecture of the proposed signage closely matches what exists in the Belmont Farms P.U.D. and would provide for 60 square feet of additional signage.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Elam who explained that the request is for amendment to the P.U.D. to allow for two freestanding signs. The possibility of allowing two development signs for the Belmont Farms P.U.D. was briefly discussed in July, 2005. A sign was being proposed at the intersection of Belmont Center Drive at Jupiter Avenue and another at Belmont Center Drive and Belmont Avenue. These pylon signs would advertise the names of the businesses in the park. In July the Commission requested that True North Architecture work with staff to provide a more detailed design of what they were proposing.

Mr. McDowell further explained that in a letter dated June 29, 2005, signed by True North's Mr. Dan Henrickson and Mr. Bruce Yowitz (owner of two other buildings in the P.U.D.) signed a letter addressed to the township requesting an amendment to the Belmont Farms P.U.D. to allow additional signage on the buildings and additional freestanding signage for the retail components. The letter requested one additional building sign per tenant (up to twenty square feet) and a pylon sign that would service the retail component at the 2350 Belmont

Center Drive property. It was agreed later that a second pylon sign near the corner of Belmont Center Drive and Belmont would also be a good idea although final location of the second pylon sign for Mr. Yowitz's buildings had not been agreed upon. Mr. McDowell explained that tonight they were seeking approval of the one pylon sign for True North and the concept of a second pylon sign with its location to be provided and approved at a later date. The two pylon signs would be identical in size, shape and materials used for construction.

One reason for the request is both property owners are actively pursuing tenants and have had good leads, but have been losing out to more high profile areas. One thing lacking for good retail tenants was exposure because the retail was located in the rear of the P.U.D. and travelers down Jupiter Avenue cannot easily see what was in the P.U.D. It was felt that a pylon sign on Jupiter Avenue and one facing Belmont Avenue would enhance the developer's ability to fill the retail space and bring continued success to the Belmont Farms P.U.D.

Chair Kessler confirmed exactly what the developer was seeking. True North was seeking approval for two pylon signs. The amendment was for two pylon signs, location of the one for True North was illustrated and the second pylon sign would require approval by the Planning Commission of its location when agreed upon. There would be two pylon signs that look exactly alike as depicted in the proposed plans.

Commissioner Corder suggested that the discussion was premature since the second location had not been agreed upon. Discussion pursued in regards to whether or not all the property owners were being represented as the Belmont Farms P.U.D. still had lots that did not have buildings constructed upon them. Discussion pursued that the request was for additional signage and no existing signage was being given back to replace the proposed additional signage request. Lighting of the sign was also discussed. The height of the proposed sign was discussed and it was confirmed that the proposed new pylon signs would be 18 feet tall each, rising about the same height as the buildings roof lines.

Commissioner Corder stated he was uncomfortable with the request in the absence of a collective consensus from all the property owners in the P.U.D. There are parcels still undeveloped. Street lighting is being proposed for the area and this area could become a big bright spot on the horizon with the addition of two lit pylon signs, 18 feet in height. Perhaps others in the future would want additional lit pylon signs. The neighborhood surrounding the P.U.D. is all residential in nature. He confirmed that he understood the marketing logic, but was concerned about the scale and the potential for light pollution in the area.

Commissioner Heindrichs stated that he did not have a problem with the additional signage request. The buildings look nice, they all have character and signs are needed to let the general public know what goods and services are in the individual buildings. He shared that the identity of the tenants is needed.

Commissioner Godfrey stated that she understood the marketing need but was concerned about the lighting of the signs. The plans provided support internal lighting of the sign which would provide for fewer glares than an exterior light shining against a sign. The sign has been attractively designed and matches the architecture of the existing buildings.

Commissioner Gerber had no problem with allowing the extra signage as the design ties with the current building architecture. However, he did have a problem with the fact that the location for the second sign (Mr. Yowitz's sign) had not been tied down. Conceptionally, he said he agreed with the sign but who had control of the corner lot on Belmont Avenue and Belmont Center Drive? It was confirmed that Rockford Construction (the developer) still owned the corner lot and that is why the exact location of the second pylon sign had not been selected. Commissioner Gerber suggested that Mr. George Dressander be contacted about the pylon signage and its location.

Commissioner Matthews stated he did not object to the size of the sign but was having problems with it sticking up 18 feet in the air. Jupiter Avenue was not like the expressway where travelers are being called in from the second lane of expressway roadway. Did the sign really need to be that tall? Mr. Elam explained that the ordinance requires 8 feet of clearance from the bottom of the sign to the ground or 42 inches for ground mounted signs. Within a P.U.D. zone the limits can be changed, but in this situation a permit will need approval from the Kent County Road Commission prior to placement of a sign along Jupiter Avenue.

Chair Kessler shared history of the Belmont Farms P.U.D. where extensive time was spent on signage before the P.U.D. was approved. The P.U.D. is in a residential setting, homes across the street from this project. We were told then that the signs were going to be as we see them now. She was not happy to see a request coming back in less than 8 years for additional signage. The signage was to be kept low-keyed. She suggested tabling the issue until a more cohesive plan approved by all the property owners could be presented to the Commission. However, she did not want a plan that showed signs towering over the neighborhood. (The Commissioners requested that staff provide the minutes of previous meetings when the P.U.D. and signage were discussed.)

