

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting of the Plainfield Charter Township Planning Commission was held at Township Hall on January 9, 2007.

Members present: Marie Kessler, Chair; Vic Matthews, Secretary; Scott Corder, Gary Gerber, Robert Heindrichs and Ray Holland. Also present were Bill Fischer, Community Development Director and Bob VanderMale, from Prein & Newhof. Leora Godfrey was absent.

1. Approve Agenda

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

Commissioner Holland supported by Commissioner Heindrichs, moved to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Approve Minutes of November 28, 2006

Commissioner Corder, supported by Commissioner Heindrichs, moved to approve the minutes of November 28, 2006 subject to minor corrections in spelling and grammar.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Meijer, Public Hearing, 3757 Plainfield Avenue NE Rezone Request from C-4 to Planned Unit Development

Chair Kessler announced the public hearing for Meijer and requested that Secretary Matthews read the application submitted by Meijer Inc., 2727 Walker Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The parcel is zoned C-4, and consists of approximately 24.61 acres and is addressed as 3757 Plainfield Avenue.

Meijer is requesting a zoning change from C-4 to Planned Unit Development in order to demolish the existing Meijer and outlet stores and to construct a new store in the rear of the site. The applicant is also proposing to make modifications to the existing gas station parking lot, reconfigure the parking lot at Olympia office campus, and create two new out-lots along Plainfield Avenue. Contact person is Mike Kinstle from Meijer.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Mike Kinstle from Meijer Real-Estate Department who stated that Meijer was seeking rezoning of the site to allow construction of a new Meijer store to replace the facility that Meijer has been utilizing for the last 30-plus years. Meijer wants to construct the new store and continue to operate the existing store simultaneously. Once the new store is complete, the old store will be demolished and the proposed improvements to the parking lot that will support the new store will be completed. Meijer is also planning for two future out lots along Plainfield Avenue. Additionally behind the gas station, Meijer is proposing a 10,000 square foot retail facility that will be developed in the future. The project is relatively complex with juggling the construction of a new facility while keeping the existing store open. Land swaps have been worked out with Olympia College and Fifth/Third Bank. Meijer has been working closely with Township staff who felt that the best course of action was to change the zoning district from the current C-4 to P.U.D. as the setbacks are more accommodating in the P.U.D. district. Mr. Kinstle closed his presentation by stating he was willing to answer questions about the project and was looking forward to working with the Township and making the proposed project a reality. Meijer's customer base is strong and Meijer wants to continue serving in the Plainfield corridor with its new store for many years into the future.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Fischer who explained for those in the audience that during the preliminary discussion phase of the proposed project, it was recommended that Fifth/Third Bank join in the proposed rezoning. Fifth/Third bank was contacted and their representative did not want to participate in the rezoning of their property to P.U.D. at this time. However, Meijer is purchasing a 40-foot wide strip of property from Fifth/Third Bank that is a part of the rezone request. That strip currently has a portion of Meijer's parking located on it so the acquisition will allow parking on Meijer owned property instead of an easement.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. VanderMale from Prein & Newhof, who explained the proposed changes to the public utilities (water, sanitary sewer and stormwater). He shared history of the Meijer store whereby originally it had its own well and water tank sitting on the property. Those were removed when Plainfield's water system became available many years ago. A lot of the undersized, cast iron piping is still on the site. It will be removed and replaced with new 12-inch water main. At the same time, the Township will take the opportunity to make additional changes along Plainfield Avenue that will benefit all the adjoining properties. Storm sewer outlets consist of two county drains that serve the site. The majority of the property drains north to Ambrose Pond and the rest towards Plainfield Avenue and the Plainfield Drain. The sanitary sewer will be reconstructed across the site to drain in a northeasterly direction into the southerly trunk located at Woodworth Avenue next to Ambrose Pond. The site improvements will benefit all the surrounding properties.

Mr. Fischer explained that the Kent County Road Commission (KCRC) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) are requiring a traffic study of Plainfield Avenue in regards to the curb cuts, etc. for this proposed project. If the rezone is approved, Meijer will come back for Site Plan Approval at which time we may see changes to the access management as a result of the pending traffic study.

Chair Kessler opened the public hearing and requested that Secretary Matthews read the two letters received into the record. Secretary Matthews read the letters from J.E. VanderLeest, General Manager, Fields Fabrics, 3701 Plainfield Avenue, which asked about a traffic light on Plainfield Avenue for the project. The letter received from Dennis Johnson, 3991 Lindberg Avenue was concerned with the lighting of the building and the parking lot and the impact those lights would have on the nearby residential homes.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Tom Lavinski, Timbers Partners, 3300 East Paris, Suite 100. He led discussion in regards to the Stuart Street easement which runs between the Franklin Mills apartments and the residential trailer park. He was also curious about the time frame for the project and whether there were plans for Mayfield Avenue to be extended to Stuart Avenue. He also discussed noise levels in general associated with the proposed project as well as lighting up the area near the apartments and mobile homes. Additionally, he asked who to contact about getting the public transportation system to come back to the old North Kent route. He was told to visit the Township Board or Township Manager.

Chair Kessler informed Mr. Lavinski that Mr. Fischer would be reviewing the lighting plans as part of the site plan approval process.

Mr. Lavinski thanked Meijer for being willing to reinvest in the community.

Chair Kessler recognized Mr. Ken Chester, 2564 Rockhill, who led discussion in regards to the traffic flow (delivery vehicles as well as customers) into and out of the site using Woodworth Avenue. He was also concerned about the internal service drives which will have increased traffic.

Chair Kessler finding no others who wished to speak on the issue closed the public hearing and returned discussion to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Holland led discussion in regards to widening the internal service roads if possible creating left turn and right turn lanes. He liked the idea of redefining the service roadway and areas within the parking lots allowing for safer transportation (pedestrian and vehicular) movement from/to the store, gas station and out-lots. He confirmed that Fifth/Third Bank would maintain its zoning district classification of C-4.

Commissioner Gerber stated that he had a few site plan questions that would be raised at the appropriate time, but rezoning the site was very logical.

Commissioner Matthews was very supportive of the proposed zoning change and agreed with Commissioner Holland that the traffic flow would probably increase on the internal service roadways. It is much easier to make a left at the traffic signal at Woodworth Avenue and Plainfield Avenue than it would be to cross the heavily traveled traffic lanes on Plainfield Avenue.

Commissioner Corder asked Mr. Fischer about the statements made in the Meijer rezone memo regarding site plan issues. He understood that a traffic impact analysis was underway and that the impact analysis could impact/change the curb-cuts and traffic flow as shown on the development plan, but wondered if discussion was needed about the out-lot situation and their zoning use.

Mr. Fischer explained that the uses and site improvements for the out-lots will be reduced to writing if the rezoning is approved. He stated that staff needs to clarify, as part of the site plan approval process, what type of uses will be allowed in the out-lots. The C-4 district allows any use permitted in the C-1 and C-2 zoning district. He would work on draft language regarding a use package prior to the meeting that site plan approval would be considered. He did not want to limit Meijer to just restaurants as permitted uses, but at the same time not allow every use listed as permitted or permitted as a special use such as adult entertainment establishments.

Commissioner Corder suggested to Mr. Kinstle that perhaps Meijer had specific businesses it preferred and would appreciate having further control as to what types of businesses surround their new store. The Commission has experienced situations on Northland Drive where the end use turned out different from what was originally expected. The Commission will want to watch the end result use of the out-lots closely.

Commissioner Corder reiterated his appreciation of Meijer reinvesting in the area. The Plainfield Corridor needs it, and he sincerely appreciated the effort Meijer was putting into this and the fact that they are willing to upgrade the entire site.

Commissioner Heindrichs complemented Meijer on keeping its Plainfield location as the store is heavily used. The population is there, and he was pleased to see the new store set back away from the gas station area. The proposed traffic flow was much better planned and would provide for safer pedestrian and vehicle movement on the site.

Chair Kessler thanked Meijer for their continued investment in the community. She added that the township likes the P.U.D. zone because of the flexibility and control it allows, and she was looking forward to working with the site plan.

Mr. Fischer provided a positive recommendation for the rezoning and made it clear that this particular project qualified as to the intent of the P.U.D. chapter.

Chair Kessler requested that Secretary Matthews read the findings for the rezone as follows:

1. The rezone request is compatible in character and will be harmonious with the adjacent land uses.
2. A P.U.D. will provide greater control and flexibility to address such issues as site aesthetics, access management, and infrastructure (public water, sewer, and stormwater)
3. The proposed development plan is similar to the existing use of the property and will not endanger the safety of the residents in the area.

