

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting of the Plainfield Charter Township Planning Commission was held at Township Hall on January 8, 2008.

Members present: Secretary, Vic Matthews, Scott Corder, Robert Heindricks. Ray Holland, Charles Jylha and David Ridout. Also present was Bill Fischer, Director of Community Development. Absent was Gary Gerber.

1. Approve Agenda

Secretary Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and introduced the Agenda.

Commissioner Heindricks, supported by Commissioner Holland, moved to approve the Agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Election of Officers for 2008

Secretary Matthews announced that Election of Officers for 2008 was open for nominations. The following nominees were nominated and voted upon:

Commissioner Heindricks, supported by Commissioner Ridout, moved to nominate Vic Matthews for Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Corder, supported by Commissioner Jylha, moved to nominate David Ridout for Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Corder, supported by Commissioner Jylha, moved to nominate Ray Holland for Secretary of the Planning Commission.

The individual motions were voted on together and were approved unanimously. The Planning Commission officers are as follows:

Chairman	Vic Matthews
Vice Chair	David Ridout
Secretary	Ray Holland

3. **Approve Minutes of Special Combined Meeting of 10/30/2007**

Commissioner Corder, supported by Commissioner Heindrichs, moved to approve the special combined meeting minutes of 10/30/07 subject to minor corrections in spelling and grammar.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Plainfield Charter Township, 6124 and 6156 Belmont Avenue
Public Hearing Rezone Request From C-1, Commercial to Office
George Meek or Robert Homan**

Chair Matthews requested that Secretary Holland read the application submitted by the applicant and owner of the property, Plainfield Charter Township. The property is currently zone C-1, Commercial. Township Supervisor, George Meek and Township Manager, Bob Homan, on behalf of the Township Board, have submitted an application requesting the rezoning of the two Township owned parcels located on Belmont Avenue directly across the street from Township Hall.

Chair Matthews recognized Mr. Homan who shared the history of the parcel referring back to 1960 when the building at 6156 Belmont Avenue was the Township Hall. Various businesses have been conducted within the building since that time and the building has been updated and changed as needed. However, the building is old and in need of extensive repairs to update it to today's requirements. The Township Board has decided to tear the building down and sell the vacant property. They will try and sell the 6124 Belmont property with its existing building, but Mr. Homan indicated that it may need to be demolished some day as well. Since the property is C-1, Commercial and that zone allows for many businesses that would not necessarily be welcomed into a neighborhood setting, the Township Board thought it would be appropriate to change the zoning to Office which would provide a better buffer and compatible uses for the neighborhood. Mr. Homan stated that perhaps 10 to 20 years from now, someone will consider that this area would be a great addition to the retail core of the Belmont community and request a rezone back to commercial, but not at this time.

Chair Matthews read the Public Hearing Participation Rules to the audience and opened the public hearing. Finding no one who wished to speak on the issue, Chair Matthews closed the public hearing and recognized Mr. Fischer.

Mr. Fischer explained that the proposed zoning is appropriate given the designation in the 1998 Master Plan for this area as low density residential and

changing the zoning from commercial to office is a down zone. The office designation provides greater protection and compatibility for adjacent residential uses.

Mr. Fischer further explained that the C-1, Commercial designation allows for more intense uses, which are likely better suited for other locations. Additionally, the Township offices have moved across the street and the likeliness of this area developing into a commercial retail area has declined considerably with development of the Belmont Farms PUD and the YMCA. Staff finds that the proposed rezone would be an improvement to the area, providing more parking area on a congested site and improved traffic flow for the remaining building. Mr. Fischer reminded the commissioners that any new site development will require site plan review, providing the opportunity to make sure that the adjacent residential uses are appropriately screened.

Commissioner Corder led discussion regarding the General Location Map provided by staff; the zoning districts surrounding the two parcels, and the numerous adjacent businesses such as the U.S. Post Office, Township Fire Station, Township Hall, the party store and ice cream parlor, hair salon, etc. He suggested that we should not narrow the Township's options to finding a business that wanted to purchase the two parcels and the one remaining building. Mr. Homan explained that the ultimate goal was to sell the property rather than remain as landlords. He indicated that it is the consensus of the Board to try and sell the property, hoping the existing building can be rehabilitated for an acceptable and profitable use in the neighborhood. If not successful, the building can always be taken down and the land sold vacant.

Commissioner Holland agreed that due diligence had been done by staff and there were many options available under the Office zone classification.

Commissioner Heindrichs confirmed that he was the board member who desires to sell the building at 6124 Belmont rather than have it torn down. However, he was not comfortable with all the uses that would be allowed in a C-1 zone and preferred the Office zone being used as a buffer.

Commissioner Ridout and Commissioner Jylha led discussion regarding enlarging the Belmont Center PUD to include these properties and other smaller properties in the immediate area. It was decided that presently, the Office zone was more appropriate. The existing building and its attributes were also discussed.

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

1. The proposed use of the parcel is consistent with the direction of the draft Comprehensive Plan.
2. The existing use of these properties will not endanger the safety of the residents in the area.
3. The existing uses are adequately served by the necessary services and facilities.
4. The proposed change in zoning provides for uses that will be more compatible and harmonious with the adjacent single-family residential uses.

Commissioner Heindrichs, supported by Commissioner Jylha, moved to make a favorable recommendation to amend the Zoning Ordinance of Plainfield Charter Township and Zoning Map for the described property from C-1, Commercial to Office.

Motion carried unanimously.

**5. Video-Tech-Tronics, Site Plan Review
859 West River Center Drive, Roger Lamer, W. L. Perry**

Chair Matthews requested that Secretary Holland read the application submitted by W. L. Perry, Associates, LTD. 226 Quimby NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505, on behalf of Video-Tech-Tronics, (VTT) located at 859 West River Center Drive, Comstock Park, Michigan 49321. Contact person is Roger Lamer from W. L. Perry. The applicants would like to add 1,505 square feet to their existing building.

Chair Matthews recognized Mr. Kevin Edison from W. L. Perry who presented the site plans and explained that the project is basically a small addition off the back of the existing masonry building. The proposed structure will be a steel sided, wood structure, tying onto the existing masonry building. Additionally, a small area for parking and trucks will be provided and the dumpster enclosure will be relocated.

Mr. Edison stated that the comments and recommended conditions of approval from staff have been reviewed. He responded to the recommended conditions as follows:

1. The dumpster construction material will be metal to match the siding.
2. They will install a knox box as required by the Fire Department.

3. Documentation to FEMA verifying the building elevation is not a problem. They do realize that the building is within the 100-year floodplain and they have gone through the calculations and determined that about five yards of soil will need to be trucked out and put on the area above the floodplain. Mr. Edison stated that they will include that information in the drawings and provide them to Township when ready.
4. Showing the existing 25-foot wide drainage easement along the west property line shall also be shown on the revised plans.

Chair Matthews recognized Mr. Fischer who explained that the existing building is approximately 4,300 square feet in size and that VTT has been in Plainfield Township since 1996. They are a company that provides and installs fire and security systems for businesses. They have grown and added staff to a total of twenty employees. As a result, they are in need of the proposed expansion. He shared that staff is pleased to witness another business in the Township having success in today's economy. Mr. Fischer further stated that overall, this is a clear-cut request as the addition is proposed to the rear of the building and all site plan criteria (setbacks, parking, etc.) are being met. The dumpster is being relocated to the rear of the building. He stated that he would like to see more landscaping but appreciated the additional red maple trees being provided. He explained that if the landscaping could not be accomplished prior to occupancy, arrangements can be made by working with staff for occupancy prior to spring weather. He stated that staff recommends approval of the site plan with minor conditions.

Commissioner Heindrichs stated that he was happy to see the dumpster enclosure moved to the rear of the building and had no problem with the enclosure being metal instead of masonry construction.

Commissioner Corder observed that the choice of siding material for the dumpster enclosure was obviously due to cost. He stated that he had visited the site and considered the existing building constructed in a tasteful manner. He encouraged the applicant to work with staff and make a careful selection of the siding color for the addition and the dumpster enclosure. He explained that we suffer within the Township with a lot of properties where additions have been constructed with metal siding with a resulting aesthetic we have not looked upon fondly.

Commissioner Corder continued and explained that he liked the red band around the existing building and suggested that it be a detail that might be continued into the siding area. The contractor, Mr. Jimmy McHugh asked to be recognized. He explained that he was the general contractor and that the client wanted to get away from the red stripe. The existing building is 42 feet wide and the new addition will be 41 feet wide and as a result, the curb appeal of the building from the road will stay the same. Mr. McHugh further explained that there were two different types of steel siding including the conventional post frame siding which is flat with a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch rib on 9 inch centers and some of the iron frame buildings in the area have the ribs so they are in and the flat is out. He explained that those are 12 inches on center and that is what they are putting on this building. He indicated that this type of addition to a building end is an extremely efficient and cost effective way to put together a warehouse. He further explained that where the addition connects to the masonry building, a tight weather seal can be made and still maintain good curb appeal.

Commissioner Corder stated that the dumpster enclosure would not be visible from the street, but it would be nice if the siding on the dumpster enclosure matched what will be placed on the addition in terms of color. Mr. McHugh responded and stated that it would be the same siding with a nice trim and if for some reason the enclosure becomes damaged, the metal siding can be replaced.

Commissioner Corder stated that he liked the improved landscaping and congratulated the applicant on having one of the more tasteful buildings in that area. Further, he stated that he was glad to see that VTT was staying in Plainfield Township and wished them the best of luck.

Commissioner Holland stated that he appreciated the fact that the color of the steel addition would match the building and that the dumpster enclosure would be made from the same stock.

Commissioner Ridout noticed that the previous dumpster enclosure had been made of wood and the new enclosure material will be an improvement.

Commissioner Jylha stated that he visited the site and noticed that the ground was being prepared for the new construction. He verified that the trash enclosure would be moved at least 10 feet from the building. Mr. Fischer explained that the Fire Department's code required the 10-foot separation and they would have to sign off on the dumpster's final location prior to construction.

Mr. McHugh confirmed that the steel for the building had a one-hour fire rating on the interior and exterior of the building. The interior would be 29-gauge steel and 26-gauge steel on the outside. The smaller the number, the thicker the steel. He indicated that it helped him sell steel interiors because the steel had the same fire rating as dry wall.

Chair Matthews requested that Secretary Holland read the conditions for site plan approval as follows:

1. The dumpster enclosure shall be constructed of metal material and shall be located a minimum of 10 feet from the new addition.
2. The knock box shall be installed as approved by the Fire Department.
3. The property owner shall submit documentation to FEMA verifying the building elevation.
4. The existing 25-foot wide drainage easement along the west property line shall be shown on the plans.
5. Proposed material cut and fill volumes shall be shown on the plans as approved by the Township Engineer.

Commissioner Corder, supported by Commissioner Heindrichs, moved to approve the site plan for Video-Tech-Tronics, 859 West River Center Drive, as presented subject to the conditions listed.

Motion carried unanimously.

**6. Grand Rapids Rowing Association Boathouse, Site Plan Review
291 North Park, Katerberg Verhage Properties, LLC, Mike Stemo**

Chair Matthews requested that Secretary Holland read the application submitted by the Grand Rapids Rowing Association (GRAA) to build a boathouse on a parcel consisting of 2.14 acres addressed as 291 North Park Avenue, Grand Rapids, Michigan. The site is located south of the West Michigan Whitecaps property on the Plainfield Township/City of Walker boundary.

Chair Matthews recognized Mr. Dave Filipiak, Vice President of the Rowing Association, who presented the site plans and explained that GRAA desires to build a new boathouse in the coming year on the Grand River in Plainfield Township. The proposed 8,000 square foot boathouse will serve as a rowing center for the community to continue developing the sport for amateur rowing enthusiasts of all ages.

He also provided historical pictures of the former Grand Rapids Boat and Canoe Club within the City of Grand Rapids where they operated from until 2004 when the facility was damaged by a flood and ultimately condemned by the City. After that, they operated out of Mr. Verhage's property and have since entered into a lease agreement for the 2.14-acre parcel in 2007 where the new facility is to be built.

Mr. Filipiak explained that the new boathouse will be a "LEED" certified design with 8,000 square feet of space eventually providing three bays for safe and secure boat storage with 50 or more rowing shells (boats), a heated bay for boat repair and maintenance and outdoor storage for launches. A mezzanine provides an area for meetings and storage. The main level of the boathouse has a cement exterior and is designed for future expansion. The boathouse also meets Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) standards and will be built to accommodate flooding of the Grand River.

Access comes off North Park Street through the Katerberg-Verhage property. We have been rowing from that location for a couple seasons, and the access road is most of the way to the new facility, but there are requirements to finish the access road. He provided a rendering of what the proposed building would look like when constructed. The construction plans had been submitted to the Building Inspector for review and approval.

Mr. Filipiak continued and explained that the busiest time of the year is the spring when they have between 50 and 70 high school junior participants. Additionally, they have 40 to 50 participants from Calvin College rowing from the facility in the spring. The spring season usually runs from mid March to early June. The summer season begins in June and runs through August when they have less participation. He explained that they also sponsor "Learn to Row" activities for the community. The fall season is from August to around November 15th. when the docks are pulled from the water. Usually the docks are in the water providing access to the river from mid March until mid November. When there is ice on the river or very high water conditions, the facility would be used to secure the rowing shells, storage and make repairs on the equipment. The rowing shells require maintenance and need to be stored out of the weather.

Mr. Filipiak stated that they were open to a color scheme, both from the property owner and the Township, and since they were leasing the land from a landscaper supplier/provider, he was sure that a landscape design could be properly worked out to everyone's desires.

Chair Matthews recognized Mr. Fischer who stated that staff was very supportive of the propose project as the GRRC is a great cause and helps fulfill some of the needs identified in the Township's Parks and Recreation Master Plan by providing public access to natural features such as the Grand River and Rogue River. He stated that this is another opportunity for an organized club to have a boathouse and he referred to the success of the Jupiter Boathouse. He stated that our residents have the unique opportunity to stand on the Jupiter Bridge and watch the regatta or just watch the rowing club practice.

Mr. Fischer continued and explained that this project straddles the Plainfield Township / City of Walker boundary lines so staff invited Mr. Scott Conner, City of Walker Engineer, to participate in the development review meetings which went very well. He explained that access will be through the City of Walker, through Katerberg's site, and that Mr. Verhage may want to develop some of the surrounding property in the future. He further explained that staff continues to work with Mr. Verhage and the applicant on the possibility of extending the water main as this project needs proper water supply/fire protection. He stated that the closest fire hydrant is about 500 feet to the north, but the Fire Department needs the hydrant to be within 400-feet of the structure and as a result, the water main will need to be extended to this property. Mr. Fischer indicated that staff will continue to work with the applicant to resolve this manageable issue.

Mr. Fischer indicated that the plans show a 66-foot wide easement from the Whitecaps' property through Katerburg's property. This was originally set up in the 1990's for a possible seasonal access drive for the Whitecaps. However, the potential benefit of having such a drive has not outweighed the cost due to the physical/environmental challenges. Furthermore, the White Pine Trail has been constructed within a portion of this easement. Staff believes it is highly unlikely that a future road can be constructed in a cost effective manner nor that it is needed. Mr. Fischer concluded and stated that overall this is a project that supports a great cause and the Township is fortunate to have the Grand River traveling through the community and this project provides another opportunity for the region to have recreational access to this beautiful natural feature.

Commissioner Holland indicated that he liked the rendering of the building and stated that the proposed project would be very attractive. He asked about the materials for the garage doors and the inside building usage, racks, storage area, etc.

Commissioner Heindrichs stated that he welcomed the proposed addition to the township.

Commissioner Corder led discussion regarding the abandonment of the 66-foot easement between Katerberg and the Whitecaps' property. He was also concerned about future splits for the adjacent properties. He also suggested that a nice sign would give the building additional community recognition. The loft space was also discussed. He ended his remarks by stating that he liked the idea that the building would be more visible for patriots of the sport than the Jupiter Bridge Boathouse is today.

Commissioner Jylha asked about Phase 2 on the plans. It was confirmed that eventually the GRAA would like to build a small locker facility and restrooms as funds become available. They currently manage the site with portable toilets from a local provider. Events would not be run out of the new facility; those would be run out of River Side Park as is done now. The regattas can have a couple thousand people watching and participating and those numbers would be extremely hard to manage from the proposed site.

Commissioner Jylha led discussion regarding the equipment ownership, parking in general, and handicapped parking. The plan provides for 27 parking spaces including 2 barrier free. Mr. Filipiak indicated that parking has not been a problem in the past as most participant's car pool and the general public will not be allowed on the facility grounds. Mr. Jylha also reminded the applicant that the barrier free parking spaces and accessible route into the building needed to be paved. Mr. Fischer indicated that the Building Official will follow up on this issue.

Commissioner Ridout continued the discussion in regards to parking and it was confirmed that the races were not held at the proposed facility but at River Side Park. People using the White Pine Trail would not be allowed to congregate at the boathouse as access to the property would be limited. The roadway would be gated and accessed through North Park. Hooking into the Township Sewer System was also discussed. Mr. Fischer explained that this was discussed at development review and the Township Engineer confirmed that the new facility could be connected to the system.

Chair Matthews stated that he personally and on behalf of the Township, was very happy they are building within the Township. He further stated that this is a wonderful use for this property and he was delighted to have them in the community.

Commissioner Corder confirmed that landscaping and lighting issues would be worked out with staff. He further stated that he was delighted any time a building is proposed as a certified "LEED", (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) within the Township. He indicated that this is significant and does not go unnoticed by the Planning Commission.

