

**PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF GRAND RAPIDS  
Minutes May 25, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of Grand Rapids Charter Township was held at the Township Hall on Tuesday, May 25, 2021.

Present were Chair Wayne Harrall, Vice Chair Scott Conners, Secretary Dave Van Dyke; Commissioners Doug Kochneff and Mark Prein. Also present were Township Attorney Jim Scales and Planning Assistant Lindsey Thiel. Commissioners Dan Ophoff and Steve Waalkes were absent.

**1. Approve minutes of April 27, 2021 regular meeting.**

**Dave Van Dyke**, seconded by **Scott Conners**, moved to approve the minutes with the following change:

Under item 3, second paragraph, last sentence removed the second “don’t” and replace with “to”.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

**2. Public Hearing – Knapp Valley Gardens – Request for Special Land Use for existing Commercial Landscape Business at 4100 & 4120 Knapp St SE.**

Mike Vander Ploeg, Knapp Valley Gardens, gave an overview of the application. He has owned the business since 1978 and the business has not changed. Small changes were made to the initial application to reflect the Planning Commission’s notes from the previous meeting.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Scott Conners**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:05 pm.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

No one wished to speak on the application.

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Dave Van Dyke**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:06 pm.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

Jim Scales went over the proposed resolution.

Wayne Harrall noted that there is a nursery area and flagstone storage near the east drive that should be delineated on the plan.

Dave Van Dyke mentioned item 2(e)(i) and wanted to add Knapp Valley Gardens to specify vegetation from their job sites only. He also mentioned item 2(h) and wanted Knapp Valley Gardens added to that item for clarification.

Wayne Harrall noted the hours listed on page 7 of the proposed resolution and asked the applicant if they are correct and satisfactory. Ken Kooistra, Knapp Valley Gardens, responded the listed hours are their current hours. He then asked about the possibility of adding some lighting to the site, due to some recent issues. Wayne Harrall responded they could receive the Zoning Administrator's approval for additional lighting. Scott Conners said they could add lighting if it is internal to the site for security. Dave Van Dyke suggested changing item 8(s) to internal lighting according to the Township ordinance. Wayne Harrall said he would want to add the Zoning Administrator's approval of the lighting.

Doug Kochneff mentioned item 2(l) and asked if there should be additional screening on the Knapp boundary. Mike Vander Ploeg responded they do try to soften it with landscaping. Doug Kochneff replied he would like to see a little more on Knapp and wants to be sure it is screened in the future since it is right on Knapp.

**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Scott Conners**, moved to approve the Special Land Use Resolution as presented with the following additions:

- Flagstone storage and nursery areas delineated;
- Landscaping maintained on Knapp in front of bin storage areas;
- Additional internal lighting meeting the Township Ordinance allowed with approval from the Zoning Administrator;
- Add "Knapp Valley Gardens" to items 2(e)(i) and 2(h).

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

3. **Public Hearing – Cascade Hills Country Club – Request for Special Land Use Approval for 77 Space Parking Lot Addition.**

The applicant presented the application. He mentioned this project is in the long range master plan for Cascade Hills Country Club. He said they will be removing a grass area for the parking lot. There will be a berm for screening and pedestrian crosswalk that connects to the swimming area.

Wayne Harrall asked if they are going to work around existing trees. They responded as much as possible. Mark Prein said the plan looks like they are removing only 2 of the 8 existing trees.

Wayne Harrall said two letters were received from residents regarding the project. He mentioned a letter from resident Tom Fox in support of the project. He brought the Planning Commission's attention to a letter from resident Joe Paparella. Both letters were received and made a part of the record.

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Dave Van Dyke**, moved to open the Public Hearing at 7:32 pm.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

Brian Benson, 3924 Cascade Road, lives by the Country Club; asked for a clarification of the new parking lot location.



**Mark Prein**, seconded by **Dave Van Dyke**, moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:33 pm.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Wayne Harrall commented that the main concern of the last meeting was the stormwater. He said the applicant has shown that the stormwater goes to the northeast and will be retained on site.

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Doug Kochneff**, moved to approve the Special Land Use Resolution as presented.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

4. **Site Plan Approval –Evergreen Townhomes/Wheeler Development Group – Request for site plan approval of a 10.4 acre R-PUD located at 3141, 3199, and 3333 East Beltline Ave.**

Dennis Cole, Nederveld, presented the application. He said there is very little change from the plans presented in November. There is a clubhouse shown instead of a pavilion and they would like to have the option of the clubhouse. He went over the water, sewer, and stormwater management plans. He said they are talking with MDOT on drive access and stormwater though they don't have their final approval, but he believes they will get it soon. He said he was confident that the site can hold and infiltrate the stormwater.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Scott Conners commented that he would like to see the payment in lieu of construction of a trail in the conditions for approval. Ryan Wheeler inquired if the payment could be tied to occupancy and not the building permits.

Wayne Harrall agreed and added that lighting would need to be approved by the Zoning Administrator. He talked about the drainage on the site and commented that the applicant is being held to the future standards for stormwater and mentioned the new standards. Mark Prein added that stormwater management is very important in that area. Scott Conners said the MDOT pond is the ultimate overflow safety net. Wayne Harrall added that MDOT is currently working on installing a fountain to increase evaporation of the pond.

Scott Conners mentioned the clubhouse and that the applicant would like it as an optional upgrade, otherwise they would build the pavilion.

Wayne Harrall asked if trees would be retained on the East Beltline. Dennis Cole talked about the overall landscaping plan and said it does comply with the East Beltline Overlay District. Wayne Harrall asked about the trees in the perimeter no disturb areas. Dennis Cole said there are more trees in the no disturb area than shown on the plan.

Dave Van Dyke commented that the continuous drive and street names are confusing. Dennis Cole responded the Kent County Road Commission required them to do that.

**Dave Van Dyke**, seconded by **Scott Conners**, moved to approve the site plan for Evergreen Townhomes/Wheeler Development Group for an R-PUD located at 3141, 3199, and 3333 East Beltline Ave with the following conditions:

- Payment into a trail escrow fund on or before the occupancy permit is issued;
- internal lighting approval by the Zoning Administrator;
- applicant has the option to build a clubhouse instead of the pavilion with approval of the Zoning Administrator;
- compliance with the legal memo dated May 19, 2021;
- subject to the Township Engineer's approval;
- provide open space preservation agreement;
- provide stormwater maintenance agreement;
- approval from MDOT to use their pond for 100-year flood event;
- address any outstanding issues in the legal memo dated April 21, 2021

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

**5. Initial Review – Sunshine Ridge Apartments – Request for a major amendment to the Franklin Partners PUD located at 3300 East Beltline Ave.**

Dan Hibma, Sunshine Ridge Apartments, LLC, gave an overview of the project. He mentioned the application already went to the Site Plan Review Committee. He is proposing two story apartment buildings with lofts and big patios, decks, and garages. Most of the site is greenspace and the overall greenspace is over 50%. Sidewalks, parking by the mailboxes and the signage have been adjusted since the Site Plan Review Committee meeting.

Attorney Jim Scales gave the legal review.

Wayne Harrall commented that the Site Plan Review Committee looked at this application initially in early May. There is a concern that a lot of apartments have been approved over the last couple years and the Planning Commission needs to decide what they would like to see here.

Dave Van Dyke said he thought the Planning Commission was told the site wouldn't just be apartments and mentioned the non-compete agreement with the apartments on the site. He said that the process reminds him of Celadon, since it is coming in pieces and not what was originally proposed. He added that they only approved the original large complex of apartments with the idea that there would not be more apartments on the site. He said the Planning Commission approved the office site on the East Beltline frontage because the owner was having a problem finding a senior housing buyer. He would like to see more variety of housing options.

Gary Tamminga, Franklin Partners, said they had a client for the senior housing site but they didn't commit after an analysis. They backed out because they couldn't meet their metrics and their economics didn't work in the Grand Rapids market. He said at the initial meeting with the Planning Commission they said they didn't know what would go there and the final site plan was labeled residential.



Dave Van Dyke responded that they were told there was a non-compete with The Grove at Watermark apartments. He said they knew it would be housing but they thought it would be condos, townhomes, or villas because the applicant gave the impression there would be a variety of housing. This would essentially make it a site with 418 apartments. Gary Tamminga confirmed there was a non-compete agreement.

Scott Conners commented that when the Planning Commission chipped off the front parcels they were told senior housing was still feasible. He said they moved the offices forward on the premise that senior living was still an option. Gary Tamminga responded that no one has come forward on senior living and they have inquired with larger groups. Dave Van Dyke responded that it has to do with what they were told and it seems like a bait and switch. Gary Tamminga said it was never their intent to bait and switch the Planning Commission but senior housing went away and never came back. Mark Prein added that he has concerns with trying to make it fit.

Wayne Harrall said the biggest issue is the number of apartments that have been approved in Grand Rapids Township recently and if there is a need for another 96 units. But this request is for a potential Public Hearing. Dan Hibma commented he would like to request a Public Hearing for the next meeting.

**Scott Conners**, seconded by **Mark Prein**, moved to set the Public Hearing for June 22, 2021.

**Motion approved, 5-0.**

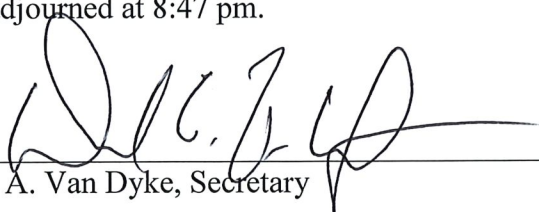
**6. General Public Comment.**

Theresa Maxim, 3070 Bird Ave NE, had 5 ½ feet of water in her backyard; concerned that the site plan was approved without things in place; talked with Wheeler Development; MDOT pond will be last resort but spoke with MDOT and they don't want to be the backup; worried her backyard will flood out again.

Steve Springsdorf, 3160 Bird Ave NE, doesn't have faith in MDOT to take care of the pond; against any plan that has a backup plan to the MDOT pond; asked how tall the retaining wall would be on the back of the property.

John Benson, 3128 Bird Ave NE, pays taxes and Kuyper College does not but they are getting a windfall; these units are smaller than mobile homes and he wasn't allowed to have on his property; thinks residents who have paid taxes should have more of a say.

It was moved by **Dave Van Dyke**, seconded by **Doug Kochneff**, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

  
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David A. Van Dyke, Secretary