

MEETING MINUTES
GRAND HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 15, 2021
Remote Electronic Meeting

I. CALL TO ORDER

Cousins called the meeting of the Grand Haven Charter Township Planning Commission to order at 7:00pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Members present: Cousins, Wilson, Chalifoux, Taylor, Reenders, Hesselsweet, Wagenmaker, Mesler and Lemkuil

Members absent: None

Also present: Community Development Director Fedewa. Associate Planner Hoisington joined the meeting at 7:30pm.

Without objection, Cousins instructed Fedewa and Hoisington to coordinate the recording of minutes.

III. STATEMENT ON REMOTE MEETING

It was noted the Planning Commission was meeting remotely on the Zoom platform because of health concerns associated with COVID-19 pandemic. Information on this remote meeting has been posted so that the public may participate. All commissioners present noted they are meeting remotely and are located within Grand Haven Charter Township.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Without objection, the minutes of the February 1, 2021 meeting were approved.

V. CORRESPONDENCE – None

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

VII. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Special Land Use – Two-Family Dwelling – Diekevers

Cousins opened the public hearing at 7:06pm.

Fedewa provided an overview through a memorandum dated February 11th.

The applicant was not present to discuss the project.

The application was discussed by the Commissioners and focused on:

- Discussed the size of the duplex and noted it is not to scale with the existing homes in the neighborhood.

- Concerns that duplexes are not suited for the neighborhood.
 - Mixed concerns over how the duplex may be maintained in the future.
 - Likely high rent due to size and quality, which will impact tenant selection.
- Would prefer stricter regulations on duplexes and where they are allowed.
 - Expression of regret over eliminating R-3 district in new zoning ordinance.
 - Duplexes were still allowed by a special land use in R-2 district under the previous zoning ordinance.
 - Fedewa explained there is a demonstrated need for two-family dwellings in the Township and the state enabling laws mandate local governments provide for land uses where a demonstrated need has been created. A special land use allows the Township to impose reasonable conditions to ensure the use fits within a neighborhood.
- Consensus among Commissioners that the front parking pads were undesirable and wished to see alternate parking solution.
- Discussed possible landscape screening.

There being no further comments, Cousins closed the hearing at 7:13pm.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Special Land Use – Two-Family Dwelling – Diekevers

Motion by Taylor, supported by Chalifoux to **table** the Diekevers Special Land Use application, and direct the applicant to make the following revisions:

1. The applicant shall be present at the meeting to discuss the application.
2. The applicant shall provide a landscape plan.

Which motion carried unanimously.

B. DDA Boundaries + Potential Projects – Step 3 of 3

Fedewa provided an overview through a memorandum dated February 11th.

The Planning Commission noted the following points of discussion:

- Questioned how properties in the proposed boundary were selected.
 - Map was generated based on previous discussion by the Planning Commission.
- Clarified how the DDA captures taxes.

- Individual property owners would not notice a difference in their taxes because the “capture” only occurs on the annual inflation that increases rates.
- Taxing jurisdictions such as Ottawa County may eliminate themselves from the capture for new properties being added to the Downtown Development Authority.
- Confirmed staff identified the priority projects:
 - Build a second emergency interconnect with the City of Grand Rapids watermain.
 - Extending municipal water, and sanitary sewer if feasible, to:
 - US-31 between Buchanan Street and Winans Street.
 - 168th Avenue between Buchanan and Lake Michigan Drive.
- Smaller project suggestions include:
 - Upgrade traffic signals to “box span” on Comstock Street at the 172nd and 168th Avenue intersections.
 - Install benches and bike racks at Township Hall, Hayes Street at 172nd and 168th Avenue intersections.
 - Add a bike path connector from Ferris/168th intersection to strip mall.
 - Replace existing streetlights with LED bulbs.

Staff will prepare a report for the DDA containing the official recommendations by the Planning Commission. It will be brought back on March 1st to confirm the report prior to distribution.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion – Single Family Dwelling Minimum Floor Area with Ryan Kilpatrick of Housing Next

Fedewa provided an overview through a memorandum dated February 11th.

Ryan Kilpatrick of Housing Next was present and provided information:

- Local employers hire workers who primarily live outside the tri-cities region due to a lack of workforce housing.
- Working class families can’t afford to live in the area due to increased cost of living.
- A smaller minimum floor area allows families to start small and add onto the house to build wealth, similar to what was done by previous generations.

- Smaller minimum is also advantageous to those looking to downsize. Such as empty-nesters and retirees.
- HOAs and similar organizations often regulate size and design standards at a development level and are far greater than Township minimums. Therefore, new home buyers will still know what they're "buying into" as far as aesthetics for new developments.
- An average new home in the area costs around \$325,000, which is out of reach for the average laborer.
- The cost of building new homes has increased significantly from the past. However, those costs are predominately attributed to kitchen and bathrooms. The cost of adding bedrooms to increase square footage is minimal when compared to the overall costs of new home construction. Meaning, kitchens and bathrooms raise the value of homes far more than a bedroom.

The Planning Commission noted the following points of discussion:

- Concerns over possible impact on neighboring property values.
 - Kilpatrick noted there was no known data to support this concern.
 - Smaller houses sell for a higher price per square foot as compared to larger homes due to the increased demand at lower price points.
- Division between Commissioners as to whether the owner of a larger home is entitled to a reasonable expectation that neighboring homes will be built to the same size and quality as their own.
 - Disagreement if owners of larger homes should dictate the rights and aesthetics of surrounding property owners.
 - There are existing examples of large and small homes co-existing. Many houses in the dunes/lakefront areas are neighborhoods with smaller cottages, but occasionally a large mansion is built. These houses may not fit the character of the existing neighborhood but are still allowed.
 - Opined that a smaller house would improve aesthetics and have a lesser impact on the neighborhood because of less lot coverage when compared to a large home that maximizes the building envelope.
 - Owners of smaller homes may be living within their financial means more than an owner of a large new home. Perhaps the owner with the smaller home should be concerned the large home will not be able to maintain and invest in their property like the existing smaller homes.
- Discussion over how large 800 sqft is compared to other sizes when constructed.

- Staff will work with Kilpatrick to provide visual representations of houses at different sizes.
- Conversation about the purpose of district regulations. Each district is separate and distinct from the others. Including, minimum design requirements, minimum infrastructure improvements, permitted and special land uses, etc.
- Worries that the smaller floor area could spur development in areas where it would not be suited, such as rural areas and agricultural land.
- Concern a smaller house would not be constructed at the same quality as a larger home. Quality is subjective. Building code requirements are minimum standards and apply regardless of the home size.
 - Minimums are found to be acceptable by the state for construction, and by the Township when adopted into the zoning ordinance.
- Keeping the minimum floor area as it currently stands is not likely to create an increased demand for houses of that size.
 - In the year since the new zoning ordinance was adopted there have not been any proposed new homes built at or close to the minimum floor area.
- The tri-cities area lacks diversity in most population demographics, promoting a solution for affordable housing could increase the economic diversity.
 - Allowing a smaller minimum floor area makes the Township more accessible to a variety of people.
 - Worries about becoming an elitist community to people who are from working-class and lower middle-class families.
- Discussed the demand for smaller homes extends passed those needing affordable housing.
 - The demand for larger houses has decreased with millennials focusing on smaller homes to allow for enhanced quality of living. Less money on the house itself allows for more to be spent on experience-economy.
 - Retirees are looking to downsize and may not need the extra space.
 - A smaller home can be maintained just as well as a larger home but may be more manageable for groups that wants to age in place.
- Other local municipalities have similarly reduced minimum floor areas.
 - Some of these municipalities (such as the City of Grand Haven) have smaller average lots.

- Suggestion to designate areas of the Township where smaller houses would be better suited, ideally near major employers.

Staff will create a report based on the discussion that occurred. A joint meeting between the Board and Planning Commission will be scheduled to determine what next steps may be necessary.

X. REPORTS

A. Staff Report

- Attorney Ron Bultje is offering the annual Planning Commissioner Essentials virtual training on February 16th.

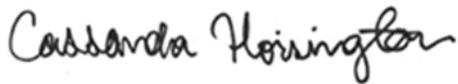
B. Commissioner Comments

- Wagenmaker requested the Planning Commission reconsider the master plan in mind of where future industrial areas should be planned. This could also be used to designate areas for affordable housing.
- Taylor indicated it is difficult to know what the Board wants from the Planning Commission regarding minimum dwelling sizes because there has not been much direction from the Board.

XI. EXTENDED PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.



Cassandra Hoisington
Acting Recording Secretary