

**WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
September 17, 2013
Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER

The Williamstown Township Planning Commission convened at 7:30 pm at the Williamstown Township Hall located at 4990 Zimmer Road, Williamston, Michigan. Chair LaMore called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda.

PRESENT: Chair LaMore, Vice Chair Dali Giese, Secretary Eidt, Commissioners Schultink, Joscelyn Brown-Timm, Annette Davis, Rick DeShon and Trustee Rick Williams.

ABSENT: none

ALSO PRESENT: Planning Consultant Chris Doozan of McKenna Associates and Planning Assistant Wanda Bloomquist

MINUTES APPROVAL

Corrections brought to the attention of the Commission:

Page 1: Road Committee request: should be context sensitive issues.

Last Page: Chair LaMore will "ask" students

Commissioner Schultink moved to approve the minutes of August 20, 2013 as corrected.

Seconded by Commissioner Davis

Motion Carries

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Public Comment closed at 7:33.

PUBLIC HEARING

Stamprite Supersine Inc.

Capital Asset Sign

148 E. Grand River

Chair LaMore reviewed the process of the public hearing.

The Public Hearing was opened by Chair LaMore at 7:35.

Planning Consultant, Chris Doozan reviewed his letter dated September 13 of the application for the Special Use Permit application regarding proposed signage. Section 29.03, subsection C, sets forth the criteria for granting a Special Use Permit.

Highlights included:

- Property located within the green zone. Tall signs do not fit the vision of the Township as set forth in the Master Plan.
- Impact on Traffic
- Current size allows for visibility by motorist.
- Allowing this size of sign could lead to a domino effect within the Township.
- Is in conflict with the Master Plan.
- Total area of sign is still over 143.4 sq. ft. vs. 48 square feet. 95.4 ft. variance would be needed.

- Recommends denial of the application.

Robert West of Stamprite Supersine Inc. spoke on behalf of the application:

- Asking for a larger sign for ease of reading by motorist at high rate of speed.
- With the building set back- the CG financial part of the sign will be more visible.
- This is considered an Informative sign.
- Messages pertaining to the community could be displayed.
- Height of sign is in accordance with the ordinance.

Questions of applicant:

- Is moving the sign closer to road an option? Setback was a requirement of MDOT.
- Why applicant believes this is a needed sign. Park Peterson of CG Financial spoke to the Commission about the brand identity for his firm. They have a similar sign in Haslett which is a bit larger. This is a larger lot and a larger sign would fit the surrounding character with the old pillars.
- Larger sign allows a larger business portion of the sign.
- Applicant does not see this beginning to a domino effect due to separation of businesses along the corridor. The stonework pulls the sign together. The length is 10.5 ft. inside the columns. The columns are an additional 30 inches each.
- Asked the perceived economic value? Provides location recognition. Numbering system on Grand River is confusing this allows for an easy landmark. Not anticipating more business off of the sign.
- Ticker tape turns off in the evening and comes on at 7:00 am.
- Suggest enlarging the CG Financial part of the sign.
- The Haslett sign is not as large as this proposed sign. Applicant does not feel the ticker is distracting. The monochrome system of the sign keeps it to one color.

Comments from citizens in support:

Kip Wilson, owner of 160 & 170 E. Grand River.

Has not spoken to the applicant about his proposal. Beautiful sign existing and agrees with the applicant on the importance of branding. Does feel it could cause a domino effect.

Commissioner Schultink moved to close the Public Hearing.

Seconded by Commissioner DeShon.

Motion approved.

Public Hearing closed at 8:08

Discussion of Commissioners:

- Proposed sign would be 12 ft. high by 15 ft. In favor of improvements for commercial owners in the Township along Grand River. Suggest compromising.
- No tenants are represented on the sign.
- Could deliberate this evening if the commission so desires.
- Commission feels they are ready to deliberate.
- Concern of setting precedent in the Township.
- Real concern of size.
- Support of happy medium so that businesses feel welcome in the community.
- Opposition to a scaled down version that is still outside the regulations in the zoning ordinance.
- Guideline for acceptable size for the size of a sign.
- Making an exception gives the door open to a larger sign for other businesses.
- Not a compelling argument.
- Could make an argument that these properties are away from other businesses.
- One solution would be to cut the size in half.
- Recommendation to the board needs to be to approve or deny.
- Appropriate to table for a month and come up with another alternative.

- Consultant Doozan reminded the Commissioners that the SUP is for the Height. The size would be an issue for the ZBA. His experience is that the ordinance limitation is appropriate for this location.
- Commercial zoning would be same for all.
- Ticker tape distracting.
- Board can override recommendation.

Secretary Eidt moved the Planning Commission recommend the Board deny the applicant's request based on the recommendations outlined in the review letter dated September 13, 2013 provided by McKenna Associates is not in compliance with the goals of the Master Plan and is in violation of the zoning ordinance.

Seconded by Commissioner Schultink

Discussion:

- In communication to the board would there be discussion to open the door to other options for the applicant.
- Poll to discuss the sentiment of the commission on the issue

Motion approved

Further discussion regarding other options that would work for the applicant.

- Feel zoning ordinance is reasonable.
- Chair is not inclined to support negotiating size of sign.
- Business is part of community and need to support them. Suggesting working with community partners.
- Does alleviate consistency. Blind observance of policy not wise.
- Flexibility not meeting the flavor of community.
- Courts look at the rulings of case by case.
- Signage is issue of businesses.
- Proposal unreasonable given the size proposed.

PUBLIC HEARING

Master Plan

Chair LaMore called to order the public hearing on the master plan.

Consultant Chris Doozan reviewed some of the highlights of the Master Plan:

Sustainability, Land use, transportation, Protection of natural features and rural character. Important to remember why residents moved to this area and the importance of the Township be cognitive of this when making decisions.

Relationship to the City of Williamston is important. Some of the Township identity is connected to what the city does. There is an emphasis to keep the city strong by keeping growth within the city. The importance of the protection of agricultural land and ways this can be accomplished.

Development pressure could come from the west with Meridian's expansion of the Urban Service Boundary.

Economic Development: Growth has been slow, however this could be changing.

Population Analysis: Discusses the aging population. Need for assisted living in the Township of Williamstown

Quality of the school district affects growth.

Availability of utilities affects the growth of Township.

The draft is open for amendment until the Master Plan is adopted.

Public Comment:

Planning Assistant Bloomquist noted that the PC removed the information from the Transportation section on Natural Beauty Roads. Given the conversation on the rural character and tree removal suggested having the section placed back in the Master Plan.

Kip Wilson, 160 & 170 Grand River Rd.: Asked the commission what they would like to see on the property. The need for Assisted Living in combination with Senior Housing is needed within the Township. Suggested he review the Master Plan and permitted uses within his zoning district.

Commissioner DeShon moved to close the Public Hearing and to add the natural beauty to the resolution to be submitted to the Board for their approval of the Master Plan.

Seconded by Commissioner Schultink.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Trustee Williams, Commissioner DeShon, Vice Chair Giese, Chair LaMore, Secretary Eidt, Commissioner Schultink, Commissioner Brown-Timm and Commissioner Davis.

Motion approved

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Natural Beauty Roads

Planning Assistant Bloomquist noted that the process for designating a road as a natural beauty road was included in the packet. This is an option for residents and the Township to look into to help protect the rural character of some of our roads.

Discussion:

- Context sensitive design would have impact. Tree removal would be addressed in this.
- Discussion of road projects is in negotiations on a continual basis with the ICDRT. Suggest partnering with other communities to bring concerns to the Committee to discuss context sensitive design within the County.
- Three of the five members of the Township Road Committee will be present at the October meeting for discussion.

Tree Preservation

Would like to see what the exceptions are in the submitted information before suggesting the Board consider something similar.

Planning and Board Reports and Review

Township Board

- Trustee Williams reviewed the actions of the Board regarding approving the development of a Code Enforcement program and updated the Commission on the road improvements.

Planning Staff

Planning Assistant Bloomquist shared upcoming events:

- October Charettes will focus on three areas along the Grand River Corridor. Dates are October 22-30th. Information was distributed to the Commissioners.
- MAP conference is scheduled for Oct 2-4 in Kalamazoo. Great educational conference to take advantage of.
- Secretary Eidt will represent the Planning Commission at the October meeting.
- Intern, Nick Najor, will begin working with Planning Assistant Bloomquist on a regional Greenways plan for our area.
- Invited Commissioners to the Sustainability luncheon next Tuesday. Planning Assistant Bloomquist will be presenting information on the Green Zone.

Planning Commission Chair

Chair LaMore asked for Commissioners to work on a sub-committee for election of officers for the Planning Commission. Vice Chair Giese and Commissioner Brown-Timm agreed to serve.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Review

Recommendation to the Board to deny the request for a Special Use Permit application submitted by Stamprite Sine for 148 E. Grand River Rd.

Resolution to the Board on adopting the Master Plan.

Sub-committee of Vice Chair Giese and Commissioner Brown-Timm for election of officers.

**Secretary Eidt moved to Adjourn
Seconded by Commissioner Brown-Timm.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

**Wanda Bloomquist
Recording Secretary**

Secretary Eidt