

**MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING / REGULAR MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER
31555 11 MILE ROAD, FARMINGTON HILLS MI
July 17, 2014**

Chair Topper called the Planning Commission meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. on July 17, 2014

Commissioners Present: McRae, Rae-O'Donnell, Orr, Schwartz, Stimson, Topper

Commissioners Absent: Blizman, Fleischhacker, Mantey

Others Present: Staff Planner Stec; City Traffic Engineer Saksewski, City Attorney Schultz and Planning Consultant Bahm

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by McRae, support by Orr, to approve the agenda as published. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. ZONING TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENT 3, 2014

CHAPTER OF CODE: 34, Zoning Chapter
REQUEST: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to add a new Grand River Corridor Overlay 1 (GR-1) District and amend the Zoning Map to establish the district located along Grand River from Middlebelt Road to Colwell Street
ACTION REQUESTED: Recommendation to City Council
SECTION: 34-3.1.34, Grand River Corridor Overlay 1 (GR 1)

Planning Consultant Bahm introduced this item, explaining that the Planning Commission had seen this proposal several times. This proposed text and map amendment addressed the Grand River Vision Plan 2013, as well as two areas that were mentioned in the City's current Master Plan: the Southeast Business and Industrial Redevelopment Area and Botsford Special Planning Area. The intent was to provide flexibility in zoning regulations to foster redevelopment either through renovation and/or expansion of existing buildings or construction of new buildings in the district. Protection of natural areas, including the Rouge River flood plain, should be incorporated into new and redevelopment projects. The use of this overlay district would require Planned United Development (PUD) approval, however, all property zoned with the GR-I overlay was pre-qualified for PUD approval, which would save time in the development review process. Development solely in accordance with the underlying zoning district would not require PUD approval unless otherwise required in the Zoning Ordinance.

Ms. Bahm reviewed changes in the proposed Zoning and Text Amendment since the last time the Commission had seen this proposal. These included:

- E. Development Standards. Maximum Building Height:
 - South of Grand River: 5 Stories/65 feet
 - East of Whittington and south of Grand River: 7 stories/87 feet for hotels
 - North of Grand River: 4 stories/54 feet

- G. Building Elements. ii. Windows and Doors. D. Ground floor windows and doors
Each ground floor shall have transparent or lightly tinted areas equal to at least 40 percent but not more than 90 percent of its portion of the façade, between two (2) and eight (8) feet from the ground.
- F. Building Elements. ii. Windows and Doors. Graphic:
Transparent glass on ground floor (2-8' above ground and 40-90% of ground floor façade).
- G. Building Elements. iii. Exterior Building Appearance.
 - a. For facades facing a street, park, river or plaza.
 - b. All other building sides not facing a street, park, river or plaza:
- J. Landscaping and Screening. K. Pedestrian Access. Options for Screening Residential When Adjacent to Alley
 - ii. Two or more properties may share a private connection to the Rouge River pathway system provided all have an internal connection to the shared private connector.
- L. Sustainable Design Requirements and Options.
 - iii. . . . This requirement can be waived or modified for improvements to existing buildings.

Chair Topper opened the public hearing.

Spencer Brown, Scott Street, Chair of the Farmington Hills Branch of the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA), spoke in favor of this proposed text and map amendment. The amendment supported the work of the CIA, allowed for greater flexibility in terms of development, and would, he thought, be well received by the development community. He asked for clarification as to why the Overlay District didn't conform to the Corridor itself.

Susan Haight, Albion Street, spoke as a resident and as a member of the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA). She was in favor of this proposed text and map amendment. This area currently was inconsistent and contained some depressed housing. This proposed amendment would promote growth, improvement and more consistency in the area. It would provide a more welcoming appearance to the residents in the area, and would set the stage for the changes that would occur at Botsford due to the recent merger. It made a statement of commitment by the City to the development of the area.

Seeing that there were no further comments, Chair Topper closed the public hearing.

Responding to Mr. Brown's question during public comment, Commissioner McRae explained that there were several focus areas along Grand River Avenue. The intent was to develop overlay districts for all for all of those areas.

Mr. Brown asked about the north side of Grand River from Whittington to Middlebelt. City Planner Stec explained that the area described by Mr. Brown had much smaller properties than the overlay district; the overlay district depended upon larger parcels being available for redevelopment. However, the area with smaller properties as delineated by Mr. Brown, as well as other similar areas, constituted "gap areas" and would still benefit from the overlay district's redevelopment.

As there was no further discussion, Chair Topper brought the item back to the Commission for a motion.

MOTION by Schwartz, support by Orr, that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council that Zoning Text and Map Amendment No. 3, 2014, petitioned by the Planning Commission, amend the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 34, to add a new Grand River Corridor Overlay GR 1 District and amend the Zoning Map to establish the district

location Grand River Avenue from Middlebelt Road to Colwell Street, be approved because the change is a reasonable alternative to the Master Plan because it will promote the land use policies of the Master Plan and will not conflict with present policies, and because the change is consistent with the Grand River Corridor Vision Plan 2013.

Motion carried unanimously.

REGULAR HEARING

A. REVISED SITE AND LANDSCAPE PLAN 55-3-2014

LOCATION: 26325 Halsted Road
PARCEL ID: 22-23-18-476-002
PROPOSAL: Place of worship and priest residence in RA-1,
One-Family Residential District
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of Site and Landscape Plan by
Planning Commission
APPLICANT: Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation Inc. (SVBF)
OWNER: Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation Inc. (SVBF)

Planning Consultant Bahm introduced this item, referring to the consultant's letter of July 1, 2014, and explaining that the Planning Commission had denied the application at its April 24, 2014 meeting. (This was a correction of the consultant's letter, which stated the plan had been approved with conditions.) Since then, the following concerns had been addressed:

1. The Priest Quarters were considered a principal use.
2. The site plan had been revised so that the Priest Quarters were rotated to the east and moved at least 11 feet north of its original location on the plan, in order to meet setback requirements and save the maximum number of trees.
3. A 9-foot building height variance was granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals for the height of the Temple at its June 10, 2014 meeting.
4. The lighting plan had been revised and light poles were reduced to 15 feet.

Regarding the site plan, all standards for a place of worship as a principal use, as listed in Sections 34-3.1.4 and 34-4.4 were met. Per section 34-5.2, the site plan noted the correct parking standard and this standard was met. The existing berm met the requirements for a 6-foot high wall or berm along all sides of the property that abut a residential district, as listed in Section 34-5.15.

Regarding the landscape plan, and per Section 34-5.14, the front yard parking lot was now separated from the public thoroughfare by a 2'6" berm along Halsted Road, and now extended along the full length of the parking lot.

All other standards and requirements were met regarding the site plan and landscape plan.

Commissioner McRae acknowledged that his company had done the photometric plan for this application but he had no role in this and this would not affect his review of this project.

Chair Topper reviewed a letter received from Joe Kosinski, Ron Troutman, Fred Molner, Robert Paige, Dennis Russell and 50 additional residents of Fairway's of Farmington Hills Condominium Association listing their concerns about this project, which they opposed. Regarding this letter, Chair Topper noted that the 6-foot berm did run the entire length of the property. She referred questions regarding traffic impact to City Traffic Engineer Saksewski.

Traffic Engineer Saksewski said that the City required a traffic study if the site was over 10 acres in area, the building over 100,000 square feet, and the parking lot contained over 241 spaces, or if there were a substantial departure from the Master Plan. This site did not meet those criteria. Halsted Road would have acceleration and deceleration tapers, and had a passing lane for northbound traffic. He felt this would effectively handle any traffic issues regarding this proposal.

Hearing no further discussion, Chair Topper invited the applicant to speak.

Steven A. Sorensen, Professional Engineering Associates, Inc., 2830 Rochester Court, Suite 100, Troy MI 48083, spoke on behalf of this application. As Consultant Bahm had already related, they had addressed concerns called out in the April 24, 2014 meeting.

Chair Topper asked about items called out in the Engineering memos (one for the site plan and one for the landscape plan) of June 24, 2014, specifically the comment that City Engineering Standards require that the detention be based on the entire site. Mr. Sorensen explained their rationale for a storm water detention pond which was not based on the entire site. Traffic Engineer Saksewski said that they would work with the applicants on this issue. However, he did reiterate that the City standard did require that the detention be based on the entire site. Chair Topper emphasized that the Engineering requirements did have to be met for both the site plan and landscape plan, including the detention area and the necessary fore bay.

Commissioner Rae-O'Donnell asked about the resident request for plantings on the 6-foot berm. Mr. Sorensen said that they were not planning additional plantings on the berm; the height was sufficient to screen the parking lot.

In answer to a question from Commissioner McRae, City Planner Stec said the existing building to be replaced on this site was about 5,000 square feet.

Commissioner Orr clarified the elevation of the berm relative to the sidewalk and Halsted Road.

Seeing that discussion had ended, Chair Topper brought the matter back to the Commission

MOTION by Rae-O'Donnell, support by Orr, that Site Plan No. 55-3-2014, dated June 18, 2014, submitted by Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation Inc., be approved because it appears to meet all application requirements of the Zoning Chapter, subject to the meeting of all Engineering Department requirements.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION by Rae-O'Donnell, support by McRae, that Landscape Plan No. 55-3-2014, dated June 18, 2014, submitted by Sringeri Vidya Bharati Foundation Inc., be approved because it appears to meet all applicable Zoning Chapter requirements.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Topper encouraged the applicants to communicate with their residential neighbors as the project went forward.

B. SITE PLAN 59-6-2014

LOCATION: West side of Hills Tech. Ct.
PARCEL ID: 22-23-18-100-036
PROPOSAL: Parking lot addition in IRO, Industrial Research Office District
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of Site Plan by Planning Commission
APPLICANT: Beztak Industrial Properties, Inc.
OWNER: Calsonic North America, Inc.

Staff Planner Stec introduced this application, which was for site plan approval to expand shared parking for an industrial/office development site submitted on June 6, 2014. The Applicant was proposing to expand the shared parking area by 37 parking spaces. Using the overhead, Mr. Stec described the configuration of the site and the location of the proposed parking.

Referring to the consultant's letter of June 30, 2014 Planning Consultant Bahm reviewed this application, which was in an IRO District located east of Haggerty Road and south of 12 Mile Road. There were currently 151 parking spaces (including 9 barrier free spaces) on the eastern portion of the site, which included Lot 1, Lot 2, Lot 3, and Lot 4. Increasing the shared parking by 37 spaces would result in 188 total parking spaces within this region of the site. No changes were being proposed to the existing buildings.

Consultant Bahm continued that the 37 additional spaces would be added on Lot 2 on the south of the detention pond, which was an open space area. The proposed spaces would abut the south and west side of the open area, and the open space area would slightly reduce in size as a result.

The proposed parking expansion would not impact any existing landscaping besides the open space area adjacent to the detention pond – a wet pond. There were no trees located in this area.

Consultant Bahm concluded by noting that the Applicant should provide a table showing the total usable floor area by land use type, total parking (existing), total parking (proposed) and show how this relates to current city parking requirements. All easements should be verified for the final administrative review.

Commissioner Schwartz confirmed with City Planner Stec that the requested parking would have no significant impact on the detention pond.

Seeing that there was no further discussion, Chair Topper brought the matter back to the Commission

MOTION by McRae, support by Stimson, that Site Plan No. 59-6-2014, dated June 6, 2014, submitted by Beztak Industrial Properties, be approved because it appears to meet all applicable requirements of the Zoning Chapter, subject to the following condition:

A table be provided showing the total usable floor area by land use type, total parking (existing), total parking (proposed), and show how this relates to current city parking requirements.

Motion carried unanimously.

C. SITE PLAN 60-6-2014

LOCATION: 34405, 34505, 34555 & 34605 Twelve Mile Road

PARCEL I.D.: 22-23-16-104-012, 013, 014, 107
PROPOSAL: Parking lot addition in OS-4, Office Research District
ACTION REQUESTED: Approval of the Site Plan by Planning Commission
APPLICANT: Stan Finsilver/Brian Bass of
Friedman Integrated Real Estate Solutions
OWNER: Arboretum I, LLC, Arboretum II, LLC,
Arboretum R, LLC & Arboretum III, LLC

Staff Planner Stec introduced this application, which was to expand shared parking by 151 parking spaces in three different areas. Using overhead schematics, Mr. Stec described the location of the overall site and pointed out the placement of the requested spaces. He noted that the Commission would need to ensure that requirements for landscaping and parking lot trees were met.

Referencing the consultant's letter of June 30, 2014, Planning Consultant Bahm reviewed this request. She noted that the Application was incomplete and should be revised before the Planning Commission took action.

Consultant Bahm summarized her findings in terms of location, zoning, and plan submission. She noted that the complex included three 3-story buildings and one 2-story building. The Applicant had not provided details regarding the current use of the buildings. There were 1,637 existing parking spaces on the site.

Consultant Bahm summarized the proposed parking additions as follows:

- Region A: The plan proposed to replace the landscaping and curb in an existing parking lot landscape area located in the southeast parking lot with 31 parking spaces.
- Region B: The plan proposed to replace an existing landscaped area located directly east of Unit 2 and south of Unit 1 with 68 parking spaces.
- Region C: The Applicant was proposing to add 52 parking spaces in an existing parking aisle and landscaped area located directly south of Unit 3 and west of Unit 2.

Consultant Bahm said there was a concern with adding parking spaces to an area that seemed, upon driving through at a peak time on a weekday, to have plenty of parking. The Applicant addressed this in email correspondence quoted in the consultant's letter. The complex was 14.5% occupied. The current 1,637 parking spaces yielded 3.75 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet. Prospective tenants were most often looking for 5.5-6 spaces per 1,000 square feet. With the additional spaces, the parking ratio would increase to 4.07 spaces per 1,000 square feet, thus increasing their chances to land the larger tenants that required that level of parking.

The Applicant's email further explained that they were creating parking closer to Arboretum II, and would also be adding ADA spaces as well. Regarding Arboretum III, the parking field on the south side was a significant distance away. By creating the additional spaces and reconfiguring the parking, this area would become more inviting and marketable for potential tenants.

The Applicant's email also referenced a major renovation of Arboretum III, including interior renovations and exterior landscaping and painting.

Consultant Bahm said that this email information was helpful, but was not part of the formal submittal and didn't provide a detailed table showing required parking and proposed parking. The floor area by building should be included in the table. The landscape enhancements referred to in the email from the Applicant should be explained further.

Consultant Bahm said that a tree removal permit was required, along with a complete tree survey. Information that had been submitted regarding tree removal and replacement was confusing.

Commissioner McRae disclosed that his company had done the photometrics for this application but he had no role in this and this would not affect his review of this project.

Applicant Stan Finsilver, Finsilver/Friedman Management Corporation, 34975 W Twelve Mile Road, Suite 100, Farmington Hills MI 48331, spoke on behalf of this application. He gave some background to this proposal, explaining that they had purchased 3 of the 4 buildings in this complex. The buildings currently had low occupancy. The buildings were constructed in the mid-80's, and followed the standards of that time. In order to attract tenants, they needed to increase their parking ratio per 1,000 square feet, as noted above. Mr. Finsilver explained the renovations taking place in the interiors, and emphasized that in order to market the buildings, they needed more parking spaces.

Mr. Finsilver explained that he understood the tree replacement standards. They were removing 48 trees and would need to replace those. Additionally they would be required to add another 20 trees.

Using a handout given to the Commissioners, Mr. Finsilver explained the proposed locations of the additional parking, and the proposed locations for replacement and additional trees. He noted that he had walked the site with City Landscaper Kettler-Schmult. He showed before and after illustrations for a building on the site.

Discussion was had regarding possibly constructing a parking structure on the property. Mr. Finsilver explained that a parking deck might ultimately be necessary, but a parking deck was expensive and unattractive. Their intent was to avoid constructing a deck, if possible. Commissioner Orr wondered how fast a structure could be built should a tenant demand a 5 space per 1,000 square foot ratio. Mr. Finsilver addressed this possibility, and explained that should a tenant require a parking deck, there were ways to accommodate the tenant while a parking deck was built, including dedicating proportionally greater existing parking to that tenant while construction went forward.

Commissioner Schwartz spoke to the benefits of this proposal in terms of parking closer to the buildings. This was the type of development Farmington Hills wanted and this property represented significant taxes for the City. However, Mr. Schwartz would like to see the expanse of pavement broken up with landscaping, including hedges and trees. Perhaps landscaping could be moved further away from the building.

Mr. Finsilver explained the process by which they located potential areas for the proposed additional parking. They tried to be the least disruptive visually. Their goal was to get spaces closer to the building without disrupting the flow of traffic and visual impact. They were planning on keeping the sidewalks for the benefit of the people who worked there.

Commissioner Stimson noted that the trees in the area proposed for an additional 31 spaces were large and mature, and did a nice job breaking up the parking lot in that area. What trees could effectively replace these? When replacement trees were planned, it would be good to include a variety, including trees that would grow large. Mr. Finsilver said they would work with the City regarding tree replacement types and locations.

Commissioner McRae noted that the Zoning Ordinance required 3 to 3.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Tonight the Commission was hearing rear-world data.

Commissioner McRae noted that the Application needed to be adjourned in order to give the Applicant time to get a tree survey done and a landscape plan submitted.

Staff Planner Stec said that the Applicant had the option of bringing the landscape plan to the Commission at the same time the Site Plan was heard.

MOTION by McRae, support by Orr, to adjourn Site Plan No. 60-6-2014, dated June 18, 2014, submitted by Stan Finsilver and Brian Bass of Friedman Integrated Real Estate Solutions, be adjourned to the August 21, 2014 meeting in order to give the Applicant time to document the existing gross and usable floor area of the office building, provide parking calculations based on the ordinance, and provide written justification for the new parking that is proposed, along with submitting a landscape plan including a tree survey so that both the site plan and landscape plan can be reviewed concurrently.

Motion carried unanimously.

D. LOT SPLIT 2, 2014 (Preliminary)

LOCATION:	27839 Orchard Lake Rd.
PARCEL I.D.:	22-23-10-476-051
PROPOSAL:	Split existing parcel into two (2) parcels in B-4, Planned General Business District and B-3, General Business District
ACTION REQUESTED:	Approval of Land Division by Planning Commission
APPLICANT:	Susan K. Friedlaender
OWNER:	Orchard 12, LLC

Staff Planner Stec introduced this item, which was for a lot split on the PUD parcel for Orchard Twelve Plaza that bordered Orchard Lake and Twelve Mile Roads. The Applicant was seeking to have a separate parcel for the approved Starbucks site.

Referring to the consultant's letter dated July 2, 2014, Planning Consultant Bahm reviewed this application, noting that the Commission had approved the final site plan of the Starbucks drive-thru restaurant on April 24, 2014. A PUD plan had also been approved for the Orchard 12 development. Therefore, all setback requirements for the restaurant were met. She noted that the two resultant parcels would meet zoning ordinance requirements.

Regarding compatibility with the existing development in the area, Consultant Bahm pointed out that:

1. As shown in Exhibit A, proposed Parcel C was compatible with surrounding parcels in regards to area, width and width-to-depth ratio.
2. The surrounding properties in the 12 Mile and Orchard Lake area had a variety of shapes and sizes. The resulting parcels of the proposed lot split were compatible with these surrounding properties.
3. Other conditions of compatibility had been previously met.

Applicant Susan K. Friedlaender, 33493 West 14 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48331, spoke on behalf of this application. She said that she would be happy to answer questions regarding this proposal.

Commissioner McRae asked for clarification regarding item (5) in the July 1 2014 Engineering review letter, regarding an access easement to allow for ingress/egress through the original Orchard/12 Plaza site as well as to allow access for the Comerica site and the former Shell Station that is being considered for a Burger King.

Ms. Friedlaender said that they were actually waiting for building permits from the City in order to move this forward. The access agreement had already been submitted to the city attorney. Traffic Engineer Saksewski further explained the rationale and process for this requirement.

In response to a question from Commissioner Orr, City Attorney Schultz said that the PUD agreement determined signage placement on the entire PUD parcel.

Seeing that there was no more discussion, Chair Topper brought the item back to the Commission.

MOTION by McRae, support by Rae-O'Donnell, that Preliminary Lot Split No. 2, 2014, submitted by Susan K. Friedlaender for Orchard 12 LLC be approved because it appears to meet applicable provision of the Zoning Chapter and of Chapter 27, Subdivision of Land, of the City Code, and will result in land parcels which relate to adjoining parcels in a reasonable manner; and that the City Assessor be so notified.

Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

June 9, City Council/Planning Commission joint meeting
June 12 and 19, Planning Commission meetings

Chair Topper asked that for clarity's sake in future minutes Commissioners be consistently referred to as Commissioners (not Mr. or Ms.).

MOTION by Orr, support by Stimson to approve the June 9, 2014 City Council/Planning Commission joint meeting, and the June 12, 2014 and June 19, 2014 Planning Commission meetings as published.

Motion carried unanimously.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner McRae noted that Commissioners often asked questions of staff and this was recorded in the Commissioners' comments. However, sometimes these questions got lost and answers were not later recorded. He asked that followup be presented at the next meeting for such questions asked.

Commissioner Schwartz addressed fireworks sales in the City, which he felt were neither an economic or visual asset to the community. He noted that State Senator Glenn Anderson was proposing a bill to roll back the law to what was previously permitted in the state. Mr. Schwartz supported this bill, and he asked the Commission to consider preparing a resolution to support the repeal of the fireworks law.

Commission Schwartz requested that the discussion regarding Motion Making be scheduled for the August 21, 2014 meeting.

Chair Topper asked the Commissioners to review the updated contact sheets in their packets.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further comments, Chair Topper adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven Schwartz
Planning Commission Secretary

cem