

**OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD OCTOBER 13, 2022

Agenda

PUBLIC HEARING: SPECIAL USE, CHOCOLATE THUNDER

Connor Tierney, representing Chocolate Thunder, was requesting special exception use approval to establish a craft food and beverage operation within an existing multi-tenant commercial center located at 656 Maple Hill Drive. The proposed craft food and beverage production facility will serve as a space which produces chocolate. Parcel No. 05-13-403-010.

STEERING COMMITTEE: HOUSING PLAN COORDINATION AND KICK OFF

A meeting of the Oshtemo Charter Township Planning Commission was held Thursday, October 13, 2022, commencing at approximately 6:04 p.m. at the Oshtemo Township Hall, 7275 West Main Street.

ALL MEMBERS

WERE PRESENT:

Bruce VanderWeele, Chair
Kizzy Bradford
Deb Everett
Micki Maxwell, Vice Chair
Alistair Smith
Anna Versalle
Chetan Vyas

Also present were Iris Lubbert, Planning Director, James Porter, Township Attorney, Martha Coash, Recording Secretary, and five guests.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson VanderWeele called the meeting to order at approximately 6:04 p.m. and those in attendance joined in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

The Chair asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, he let the agenda stand as published.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Mr. Curt Aardema, AVB, indicated he was pleased to sit in on the conversation regarding the proposed housing plan and coordination kick-off discussion, looked forward to being a part of the process going forward, and was excited to see where it leads.

Ms. Lubbert read a letter to Commissioners received via e-mail from resident Michael DeLeeuw. The comments detailed his concerns about the Maple Hill overlay and the “resolution of support for Neighborhood Traffic Calming on Green Meadow” approved by the Township Board earlier in the week. The letter is attached to these minutes.

Hearing no further comments, the Chairperson moved to the next agenda item.

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of September 22, 2022

The Chair asked if there were additions, deletions, or corrections to the Minutes of the Meeting of September 22, 2022.

Ms. Everett noted page three, at the beginning of paragraph two should be corrected to read: “Mr. Dan Lewis, Civil Engineer and the applicant’s attorney were also present...”

Hearing nothing further, Chairperson VanderWeele asked for a motion.

Ms. Everett **made a motion** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of September 22, 2022, as presented with the inclusion of the suggested correction. Ms. Versalle **seconded the motion**. The **motion was approved unanimously**.

The Chair moved to the next item on the agenda and asked Ms. Lubbert for her presentation.

PUBLIC HEARING: SPECIAL USE, CHOCOLATE THUNDER CONNOR TIERNEY, REPRESENTING CHOCOLATE THUNDER, WAS REQUESTING SPECIAL EXCEPTION USE APPROVAL TO ESTABLISH A CRAFT FOOD AND BEVERAGE OPERATION WITHIN AN EXISTING MULTI-TENANT COMMERCIAL CENTER LOCATED AT 656 MAPLE HILL DRIVE. THE PROPOSED CRAFT FOOD AND BEVERAGE PRODUCTION FACILITY WILL SERVE AS A SPACE WHICH PRODUCES CHOCOLATE. (PARCEL NO. 05-13-403-010)

Ms. Lubbert said the project area under consideration is located within the Westwood Office Plaza, a multi-tenant commercial center immediately south of W. Main Street between US-131 and N Drake Road. The proposed craft food and beverage production facility would occupy a vacant suite in the rear of the building. The tenant space, located on the lower level consists of 1,100 square feet.

Chocolate Thunder is a hand-made small batch operation that produces homemade chocolate. Current production volumes require 20 hours of work per week. The applicant has indicated there will only be one employee and that a majority of the chocolate production will primarily take place on Wednesdays and Sundays. Most of the shipments will occur at the respective mail carrier location; however, there will be an occasional scheduled pickup at the subject site. Delivery trucks would circulate the site by utilizing both access points along Maple Hill Drive, one along the cul-de-sac and the other near the northern property line.

She reported the applicant has indicated no retail is currently planned for the subject use; however, if the applicant would like to establish a retail component in the future, the special use permit would need to be amended and review and approval by the Planning Commission would be required.

The subject property is zoned C: Local Business District. Uses permitted in the C: Local Business District are outlined in Section 18 of the Township's Zoning Ordinance. Craft food and beverage production facilities, limited to 8,000 square feet gross floor area, are identified as a special exception use within said ordinance section. When reviewing a special exception use, the general special use review criteria outlined in Section 65.30 shall be followed.

Ms. Lubbert provided an analysis of the proposal against Section 65.30 of the Oshtemo Township Zoning Ordinance, concluding the special use request meets all Section 65.30 Special Use Criteria.

She recommended approval of the proposed special exception use for a craft food and beverage production facility, with a gross square footage of 1,100 square feet, at 656 Maple Hill Drive with the following conditions:

- 1) The craft food and beverage production facility shall be a hand-made small batch operation that produces homemade chocolate.
- 2) A sign permit application shall be submitted to the Township for review and approval if the applicant wishes to add any type of signage to the site.
- 3) If the applicant wishes to establish a retail component in the future, the special use permit would need to be amended and review and approval by the Planning Commission would be required.

Chairperson VanderWeele thanked Ms. Lubbert for her report and asked whether Commissioners had any questions for her.

Hearing none, and after determining the applicant did not wish to speak, he opened the meeting to public hearing.

As there were no public comments, he closed the hearing and asked for a motion.

Ms. VerSalle **made a motion** to approve the special exception use request to establish a craft food and beverage operation within an existing multi-tenant commercial center located at 656 maple hill drive as proposed, with the inclusion of the following three recommended staff conditions:

- 1) The craft food and beverage production facility shall be a hand-made small batch operation that produces homemade chocolate.
- 2) A sign permit application shall be submitted to the Township for review and approval if the applicant wishes to add any type of signage to the site.
- 3) If the applicant wishes to establish a retail component in the future, the special use permit would need to be amended and review and approval by the Planning Commission would be required.

Ms. Bradford **seconded the motion**. The **motion was approved unanimously**.

The Chair wished the applicant well and moved to the next agenda item.

STEERING COMMITTEE: HOUSING PLAN COORDINATION AND KICK OFF

Ms. Lubbert indicated at the Planning Commission's August 11th regular meeting, the Planning Commission was asked to review and answer questions presented by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research to ensure that the consultant was clear on the Planning Commission's vision for the project's end result. Based on the Commission's answers, the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research amended the project scope, timeline, and contract. Changes primarily included additional data gathering and analysis as well as additional public engagement.

After Commissioners are satisfied with the contract, the amended contract will be sent to the Township Board for final approval. In addition to reviewing the project scope, timeline, and contract, the Planning Commission will be asked to provide feedback on a draft of a supplemental housing survey.

She introduced Ms. Emily Petz, a representative from the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research who outlined the proposed contract changes, which primarily addressed data analysis and public outreach. Ms. Petz indicated that in addition to a whole suite of items included in the new plan, data and demographic types/categories that were in the old plan were also included for consistency.

Ms. Petz said also included in the contract is an outreach plan targeted specifically to Oshtemo, that includes three stakeholder meetings and four public meetings. An online survey will provide an additional public engagement option. The Planning Commission will act as a Steering Committee to guide, give tips and help through the process. Likely six-seven meetings will be required for the process.

Ms. Lubbert indicated notice for the meetings will be accomplished utilizing a mass mailing postcard with a link to the survey to be sent to approximately 9,000

registered voting households, as well as online information, posters in public spaces, word of mouth, the Township's website and social media platforms. She shared a draft of the postcard to be printed and hoped to get it to the publisher next week after Commissioners' feedback at this meeting for printing before the November 9 meeting.

Ms. Petz walked through the data that will be included in a detailed work plan, including charts, maps and tables, demographic data, housing inventory and supply and demand for housing in Oshtemo Township that was provided as part of the Kalamazoo County survey.

Ms. Lubbert indicated an amended contract with W.E. Upjohn Institute required approval of an additional \$5,000, due to extensive additional work to provide the detailed data and additional public outreach requested by the Commission at the August 11 meeting.

Ms. Petz said the additions to the contract include more detail specific to Oshtemo and public engagement than what is usually requested by entities, but agreed they are important additions that the Institute is providing as affordably as possible.

Following Commission discussion of the additional detail requested, the desire for an adequate time frame for the process, and concern about spending the additional \$5,000, Chairperson VanderWeele asked for a motion.

Mr. Vyas **made a motion** to approve the requested additional \$5,000 for the contract with W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research for provision of the Oshtemo Township housing study as amended. Ms. Versalle **seconded the motion**. The **motion was approved** unanimously.

Ms. Lubbert and Ms. Petz presented and walked through the proposed survey questions with the group. The goal was to elicit from responders their hopes and dreams, challenges, barriers, needs not met for housing in Oshtemo Township. There were a number of questions regarding the responses from Oshtemo residents provided on the Kalamazoo County housing survey. Group discussion yielded a number of changes which will be included and returned to the Commission at its next meeting.

Various additional methods for soliciting survey responses from Township residents and possibly others were discussed with the goal of participation from as many people as possible.

Also discussed were what Commissioners felt are the current strengths and unique features of the Township. Listed were the beauty of the land, especially in the west of the Township, the parks system, the combination of rural and urban areas, preservation of the rural character.

Ms. Petz concluded by saying it will be both the challenge and the goal to develop a housing plan that will address how to plan for people at every life stage as

well as to preserve the beauty of the Township. She thanked Commissioners for their time and dedication.

Chairperson VanderWeele moved to the next agenda item.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

OTHER UPDATES AND BUSINESS

Ms. Lubbert noted a joint board meeting will be held Tuesday, October 18 and encouraged Commissioners to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no further business to consider, Chairperson VanderWeele adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:03 p.m.

Minutes prepared:
October 14, 2022

Minutes approved:
October 27, 2022

From: [Deleeuw, Michael](#)
To: [Iris Lubbert](#)
Subject: Concerns on the prairies golf course PLEASE READ TONIGHT !
Date: Thursday, October 13, 2022 2:51:18 PM

CAUTION: External Email

Hi Iris, I cannot make the Planning Commission meeting tonight due to a kid activity conflict but I was hoping you or the Chair could read this as public comment? If not, please share with all the members.

I watched the last Planning Commission meeting and heard the Developer urge and push the work and completion for the Maple Hill overlay. Then, at the Township Board meeting this week, they approved a "resolution of support for Neighborhood Traffic Calming on Green Meadow" because of excessive speeds and safety concerns. The speeds are actually 35 MPH and above! There was more concerns mentioned about the streets to the north in Driftwood/Skyridge neighborhood that connect to this road.

If we already have safety issues with existing roads and safety, why would there be a rush to get a plan done that will put more traffic and vehicles DIRECTLY to this specific road? I would encourage the Planning Commission to take the time to complete studies on Traffic and Safety concerns that **the residents** are asking for! Not only on Green Meadow and Driftwood/Skyridge but also the main roads of Drake and W Main. And then require the developer to complete this work.

To the developer it is just about the golf course property and their one project, however to the residents it's about the entire area including the neighborhoods to the south, the empty commercial along W main from 9th to Drake and the already rezoned commercial to the north which should be used first. We already have enough stores and fast-food and traffic and accidents from these places. Let's take care of the existing problems and study if our roads can even handle ANY development here before creating more issues and putting people's lives at risk.

On a personal note I have lived my entire life here in Kalamazoo and my family was member of the Elks when it was private and I have been a member of the prairies golf club for many years. To me yes I care about the course but mostly I care that it will be here for not only my kids and theirs. One thing that I have a deep concern about is that if this course leaves (god help it doesn't) that you are not only taking away something from the public but also our children and young adults, what I mean is that if this course is closed then both mens and womens golf programs are going to be taking away from Kalamazoo central high school and other golf programs from other schools in this area. There is no other public 18 hole course that is in the KPS district beside Miham golf course and LOY Norrix is already there and that course is over booked and over played as is.

Golf is not just a sport but a way of life and teaches children and young adults about respect and honesty and how to hold them self's when put in difficult positions.

The sad thing is that if this was happening in surrounding areas like Richland or portage this would have been shot down so fast by the same people that are trying to make this happen, because they don't live here and dot care about our community and only care about their pockets at the end of the day. I wish the board will look deeper into this and do more research to help save what green

space we have left within Kalamazoo.

Thank you Michael Deleeuw