

Minutes of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting held April 24th, 2025, at 7 pm

8555 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

MEMBERS PRESENT: Thomas, Rober, Waayenberg, Wiersema, Giarmo, Haagsma

MEMBERS ABSENT: Billips, with notice

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Wells, Community Development Director; Dakota Swan, Assistant Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Giarmo called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

No changes to the agenda.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Consideration of the March 27th, 2025, regular Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Motion: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Rober to approve the minutes of March 27th, 2025, as is.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Public Hearings

a. 9744 Meadow Valley – Special Use Permit – Accessory Building

Gerrad Almy, the homeowner and applicant for this request, explained that he is seeking a Special Use Permit to allow for the construction of a 3,200 square foot pole barn to be used for residential storage purposes, specifically for vehicles and trailers that are currently being stored outside.

Community Development Director Dan Wells explained that the request has been found to be consistent with the intent of the Master Plan and all standards outlined in Sections 19.8 and 20.2 (D) of the Gaines Charter Township Zoning Ordinance (GCTZO). Although the proposed building is large, it is absorbed well since the subject property is so large, and the building will be located in the rear yard adjacent to tree lines, all of which will ensure the view is sufficiently screened. Staff found that no adverse precedent for development would be set by approving this request, as large accessory buildings are fairly typical in rural areas of the Township. Wells noted that staff is recommending approval of this request.

Chair Giarmo opened the public hearing and subsequently closed it as no one approached the podium to speak.

Commissioner Wiersema noted a typo in the staff memo; on page 7, Kateri Way should be referenced as being to the west of the subject parcel.

Commissioner Thomas inquired about whether the color depicted in the building rendering provided would be the actual color of the building, as it appeared very bright. Almy responded that the color will match that of the home, and it will not be as bright as it appears in the rendering.

An existing accessory building must be torn down to make room for the proposed accessory building, and there are trees on either side of the existing building; Chair Giarmo asked what Almy intends to do about the trees. Almy responded that there are two large arborvitaes that will be removed before the proposed accessory building can be constructed.

Chair Giarmo inquired about the color of the building, and Almy confirmed that it will match the color scheme of the home.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas, to approve the Special Use Permit for a 3,200 square foot accessory building.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

b. Stoneco 2025 Operating Plan

Garrett Singer, the Assistant Operations Manager for Stoneco of Michigan, explained that the proposed operating plan for 2025 is similar to those of previous years. Stoneco has the opportunity to collaborate with K&R, a local excavating contractor, to bring additional clean fill into the gravel pit located at 1856 100th Street, commonly referred to as the Barnaby parcel. Singer stated that the proposed 100,000 to

200,000 cubic yards of fill material is not necessary to meet the reclamation requirements, but Stoneco has found that it would be beneficial to the site.

Chair Giarmo asked Singer to clarify what exactly he is referring to when he says 'clean fill' - Singer responded that this would be soils, sands, and gravels coming from an ongoing project on US-131. Stoneco is proposing a driveway on 100th Street to bring materials in and will be having gravel haulers enter on the west side and exit on the east side. Material will be slowly brought in and evenly distributed east-west, going southward, so as to increase the level ground off of 100th Street.

Planner Wells stated that Stoneco approached staff approximately three months ago with the idea of bringing in additional fill, and after speaking with the Township Engineer, staff found the request to be reasonable. Bringing in additional fill material may allow the parcel to become buildable someday; the Township Engineer reportedly thought that there is a chance it could be packed to allow for the installation of septic system infrastructure. Wells added that future development on this parcel would likely entail large-lot rural developments, and that the pit will likely not be filled in entirely.

The Sand & Gravel Subcommittee met to review Stoneco's submission materials for their Annual Review and Operating Plan on March 17th, 2025, and made a positive recommendation to the Planning Commission. Wells clarified that there are no violations on the property, and added that Stoneco satisfied all submission requirements, and provided additional details about the mining activity on the parcel. With regard to the actual mining operation, Wells stated that the Township Engineer has the ability to access and inspect the operation to ensure that additional fill is free of debris. Currently Stoneco is anticipating there will be 10-20 trucks delivering fill to the mine per day, in addition to bulldozers and other large equipment working to move and disperse soil. Stoneco intends to keep the same hours of operation: Monday through Friday from 7 AM to 7 PM, Saturday from 9 AM to 3 PM, and no operations on Sundays or major holidays. Wells explained that typically materials have been distributed with the use of conveyor belts; if there are any issues or complaints regarding the new truck traffic, Wells stated that he has full faith Stoneco will act as a responsible operator and swiftly mitigate any problems. Wells concluded by saying that Stoneco may need to obtain permits from EGLE to bring in the additional fill material, so as to minimize any potential impacts to wetlands.

Chair Giarmo opened the public hearing.

Kathy VanderStel, Township Trustee and longtime resident of 10034 Kalamazoo Avenue, approached the podium to explain that she is disappointed about the introduction of heavy truck traffic into the area, as previously Stoneco was moving materials with a large conveyor belt, which was far less disruptive than gravel haulers will be. VanderStel added that she is concerned about the lack of seeding she has observed since everything has been graded, and noted that she would like to see dust and weeds in the area kept to a minimum. VanderStel added that she is very concerned about the mud that will accumulate on 100th as a result of this project, even though Stoneco has assured her that they will keep a watchful eye on 100th Street for mud and deploy street sweepers as necessary.

Singer responded that the intention is to seed the western portion of the property, as it is not planned to be touched by the inbound clean fill.

Chair Giarmo closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Haagsma identified an error on the provided site plan, as it does not match the driveway plan approved by the Kent County Road Commission; the easterly driveway was actually approved to be to the west of where it is depicted on the plan. Haagsma clarified that the western entrance is accurately depicted on the provided site plan. Chair Giarmo requested that an updated site plan be submitted to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Waayenberg asked whether Stoneco intends to have anyone check the soil density throughout the project, or if they plan to rely solely on the heavy equipment to monitor soil density. Waayenberg also inquired about whether Stoneco has any intention to “dress up” the water left in the bottom of the pit to potentially make it look more appealing, and whether Stoneco intends to re-seed the unsightly looking patches, as erosion is visible throughout areas in the pit. Singer responded that the eastern and southern sides of the parcel will be addressed in the fall, and reseeding is planned to happen in the fall or the following spring; he explained that Stoneco’s intention was to address this sooner, however, contractors they use for such services have been unavailable. Singer added that with regard to soil testing, Stoneco was planning to rely on heavy equipment. Planner Wells responded that if housing were to ever be developed on the parcel, soil testing would be a good thing to initiate; Waayenberg agreed and added that this is a fair point to address knowing that residential development of the parcel is possible.

Commissioner Haagsma suggested that the Planning Commission impose a time limit on the project if it is approved and expressed a desire to eventually limit the heavy truck traffic in the area. Haagsma also mentioned that he is uncomfortable with the uncertainty regarding the seeding process for the project. Waayenberg agreed and added that from now until the end of June is the perfect time to seed, and that the soil erosion should be addressed and seeded immediately. Haagsma mentioned that it tends to get dusty in the area, and they owe it to the neighbors to keep the site clean. If the additional fill wasn’t being brought in, the property would be seeded already; Haagsma insisted that the issue must be resolved urgently.

Chair Giarmo noted that the motion to approve the 2025 operating plan should include the same time frame as the Kent County Road Commission permits for the two driveways on site; Commissioner Wiersmea added that sampling of soils should be included in the motion as well.

Commissioner Waayenberg and Planner Wells discussed whether it is appropriate to require soil testing, or if permission from the landowner should be sought before testing the soils. Wells explained that the soil coming in should be clean and free of debris so as to not promote inconsistencies in the soil. Chair Giarmo stated that the Township Engineer is available to inspect the site and test the soils, and Wells added that the Township Engineer can collaborate with staff and the Planning Commission to determine an appropriate testing schedule.

Planner Wells clarified that conveyor equipment is currently being used for the Jeplawy parcel and will be removed as soon as possible after the project is completed.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Haagsma, to approve the 2024 Stoneco Annual Review and 2025 Operating Plan based on compliance with Section 12.12 and 12.13 of the Gaines Charter Township Zoning Ordinance with the following conditions:

- The Township Engineer will conduct spot checks of the site as deemed necessary, with the ability to require density testing as deemed necessary.
- All additional fill will be brought in within the 2025 season.
- Seeding and erosion mitigation must be addressed immediately by the end of June.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

2. Site Plan Review

a. None

3. Items not requiring a Public Hearing

a. 10505 Hanna Lake Avenue – 4 to 1 Ratio Wavier

Craig McCarty, the homeowner and applicant for this project explained that he is seeking a 4:1 ratio waiver to allow for an equal split of a 55-acre parcel amongst five trustees of the property. McCarty clarified that there has already been one split from the original parcel to create the 4-acre parcel that McCarty's home is on.

Planner Wells explained that the local ordinance requires all parcels to not exceed a depth-to-width ratio of 4:1; Parcel 5 on the provided survey appears landlocked, however, there is an access easement in place, and is not compliant with the 4:1 ratio requirement, hence the request for a waiver. Wells clarified that under state law the proposed configuration would be permissible, however, the local requirements for land divisions are stricter. Wells added that staff does not find any harm in this request; all proposed parcels are large and may be reconfigured in the future. The only deficiency staff identified with the proposal is the creation of Parcel 3 on the survey provided, which is an L-shaped parcel; Wells explained that they tend to be more difficult to work with in the long run, however, Parcel 3 is a legal parcel.

Haagsma noted that the only way to execute the land division without the ratio waiver would be to make the parcels not even in size, and that the proposed divisions are not creating a parcel too far out of scope with the 4:1 ratio requirement.

Waayenberg stated that although he would not split the property in the same way, it's approvable by the state, and he cannot find a reason for denial. Chair Giarmo noted that the family agrees about the proposed divisions as well.

Planner Wells explained that if the L-shaped parcel were to be developed in the future, it's reasonably sized and likely big enough for two rows of houses and a road in between. Staff's only suggestion would be to require the 50' access easement to be widened to 66', as the Zoning Ordinance would require an easement of that width for a private road if the parcel were to be split off and developed in the future. Haagsma echoed Wells' point and said that now is the time to make that easement. Planner Wells also noted that this area of the Township won't have utilities to support that mode of development for the foreseeable future.

MOTION: Motion by Haagsma, supported by Waayenberg, to approve the 4:1 ratio wavier with the condition that the width of the access easement to Parcel 5 increases from 50 feet to 66 feet.

DISCUSSION: Rober noted that the condition of approval may save someone a lot of trouble down the road.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

VII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Planner Wells mentioned that next month, the Planning Commission will have an agenda item requesting the rezoning of a large parcel in the southern portion of the Township to a new zoning designation, Village Residential. Wells noted that he wants to ensure it is developed well. Wiersema added that some dedicated park space on that parcel would be preferred.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 PM.

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the April 24th, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission held at the time and place mentioned above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lani Thomas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lani Thomas,

Secretary

Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Date: May 22, 2025