

DRAFT Minutes of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting held June 26th, 2025, at 7 pm

8555 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Haagsma, 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 7:00 PM.

II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA

Agenda item VI.1.a was struck from the agenda.

Agenda item VI.3.c was added to the agenda to preliminarily discuss the Stoneworks development.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Consideration of the May 22nd, 2025, regular Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas to approve the minutes of May 22nd, 2025, with corrections.

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. 1535 Eastport Drive—Special Use Permit and Site Plan Review~~

b. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – LED Message Centers in SR Zoning District

Mike Tiesema of Midwest Sign Company explained that this application is to request a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow for institutional uses in the Suburban Residential (SR) zoning district to install LED electronic message centers (ECM's). In the previous iteration of the Zoning Ordinance, institutional users in the SR zoning district were eligible to apply for a Special Use Permit to allow for ECM's; the updated Zoning Ordinance eliminated that option and fully restricts ECM's in residential zoning districts, even for institutional users. Tiesema mentioned that Midwest Sign Company is increasingly receiving more requests for ECM's, and that hours of operation would be limited so as to reduce nuisance.

Planner Wells explained that while ECM's have largely been identified as a nuisance in residential zoning districts, many users are responsible and do comply with the regulations for operating ECM's. Wells added that if the change is approved and adopted by the Township Board, this will be permitted for all institutional users in the Suburban Residential zoning district.

Chair Giarmo referenced data from the 2023 Master Plan public input survey and noted that residents are concerned about obtrusive lighting in the Township; 28.9% of respondents reported being very concerned, and 41.9% reported being somewhat concerned. Feedback from the Master Plan public input survey contributed to the justification for restricting ECM's in the updated Zoning Ordinance. Giarmo went on to add that the only way she would feel comfortable with amending the Zoning Ordinance to allow ECM's in the Suburban Residential zoning district is if the Planning Commission reverted back to permitting them on a case-by-case basis with a Special Use Permit.

Vice Chair Rober noted that the Zoning Ordinance Subcommittee extensively discussed how ECM's would be addressed in the updated ordinance, and that she feels as though restricting them in residential zoning districts is an appropriate solution.

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

Commissioner Waayenberg inquired about approving the request but significantly restricting the permitted size for the display; Planner Wells responded that the Zoning Ordinance allows for up to 40% of the sign face to be electronic. Waayenberg expressed that he would prefer to not see signs with 100% illumination in residential zoning districts.

Chair Giarmo reiterated her hesitation to permit ECM's by-right in the SR zoning district for institutional uses, to which Billips agreed.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Rober, to deny the request for a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow electronic message centers in residential zoning districts for institutional uses.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None
DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Billips, to make a recommendation to the Township Board to allow electronic messaging centers in the Suburban Residential zoning district for institutional uses so long as a Special Use Permit is obtained.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: Giarmo, Wiersema, Billips, Waayenberg, Thomas
NAYS: Rober
ABSTAIN: None
DECISION: Motion Carried (5-1)

2. Site Plan Review

a. 6207 East Paris – Site Plan Review

Todd Stuive of Exxcel Engineering explained that the applicant is seeking approval for an 83,000 square-foot industrial building intended to accommodate four tenants. Stuive noted that the easternmost tenant bay provides more parking than the rest of the site, as the applicant has arranged a tenant already, and understands their parking demands require more spaces than the minimum requirements in the Zoning Ordinance. A stormwater detention basin is proposed to the west of the building, and the Fisk drain runs through the parcel to the west of the basin. Stuive added that EGLE wetland permits have been obtained for impacts to wetlands.

Planner Wells stated that the request is fairly straightforward, and the Township desperately needs more of this scale of light industrial spaces, as several users in the Township are looking to expand. Wells noted that industrial buildings as such are typically not difficult to find tenants for, and that it is beneficial for economic development to have spaces capable of accommodating smaller industrial users. Staff identified that no sidewalks are depicted on the provided site plan; although utility easements in the area have complicated development near the edge of the site, Wells said there may be room to install sidewalk. The site plan was found to have adequate circulation and access, and all landscaping requirements were found to be met. Wells highlighted the landscaping plan and said that for an industrial site the landscaping is well done, and that no plantings appear to negatively interfere with utility easements. Wells concluded by stating that staff is recommending approval of the site plan review with the condition that a signage plan is submitted and reviewed administratively.

Wiersema advised that the applicant install sidewalks and inquired about where they might be able to fit. Stuive clarified that the sidewalk would be installed in the right of way, and all landscape plantings would be within the parcel boundaries.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas, to approve the site plan with the following conditions:

1. Signage plan shall be administratively reviewed.
2. Sidewalk must be installed in the right of way in accordance with KCRC.
3. Applicant must obtain all outside agency approvals.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

2. Items not requiring a Public Hearing

a. 3316 68th Street – Major Condominium – Dutton Center Phase II

Dan Larabel of Allen Edwin Homes explained that although Phase II of the Dutton Center PUD already underwent the platting process, the developer now desires to switch the land division method to a site condominium for the southern portion. The general layout of the development and all roads remain unchanged; the only difference is the method by which the land will be divided.

Planner Wells added that the switch to a site condominium was partly in an effort to loosen regulatory oversight from the Kent County Drain Commission. Specific details pertaining to the modifications will be presented at the July 24th meeting, when the Planning Commission considers a site plan amendment for Dutton Center to account for the changes to the site plan.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas to approve the condominium plan with the condition that the applicant must obtain all outside agency approvals.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

b. 2319 Crystal Meadows Street – Tentative Preliminary Plat – Hoffman Meadows Phase III

Dave Hanco with Feenstra & Associates explained that the applicant is seeking tentative preliminary approval for Phase III of the Hoffman Meadows development. The development will feature 50 homes,

utility easements as required, and compliant roads and streets as per Kent County Road Commission standards.

Last month this request appeared before the Planning Commission when staff was under the impression that the request needed to be reviewed using the updated Zoning Ordinance, which calls for a 12,000 square foot minimum for lots in the SR zoning district. Planner Wells explained that a clause in the Zoning Ordinance allows the applicant to choose which regulations their request is reviewed against if the Zoning Ordinance is amended after the time of application. Based on this stipulation, the developer is permitted to proceed with 10,000 square-foot lots as was allowed under the previous iteration of the Zoning Ordinance. Wells added that the proposed homes will fit in well with the existing neighborhood.

MOTION: Motion by Wiersema, supported by Thomas to take this item off the table for discussion.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Thomas to make a positive recommendation to the Township Board for a tentative preliminary plat for Phase III of Hoffman Meadows.

DISCUSSION:

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

c. 1264 100th Street – Preliminary Discussion – Stoneworks Condominiums

Todd Stuive of Exxcel Engineering returned to the podium to informally present a condominium plan to the Planning Commission and get their initial thoughts on the site plan. Stuive explained that the development is planned to include 53 single-family detached site condominiums, eight 4-unit condominiums with side-loaded garages, and 6 parcels along Pease Avenue intended for single-family detached homes. Stuive added that the existing retention pond will remain, and a walking path and green space will be included in the southern portion of the site. The units are anticipated to be listed between \$400,000 and \$600,000 and building elevations will be provided during site plan review.

Wiersema inquired about roads and sidewalks; Stuive responded that the development will feature public roads and sidewalks throughout.

Planner Wells noted that this project is one piece of a larger village center concept for the southwest portion of the Township that hasn't been fully fleshed out quite yet.

VII. **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

VIII. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the June 26th, 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 a horizontal line.

Lani Thomas,

Secretary

Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Date:

A handwritten date in cursive script that reads "July 24, 2025". The date is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Date:".