

Minutes of the Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting held October 23rd, 2025, at 7 pm

8555 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Thomas, 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

The agenda was approved as presented.

III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Consideration of the September 25th, 2025, regular Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Motion: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Rober to approve the minutes of September 25th, 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

None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Public Hearings

a. None

2. Site Plan Review

a. Amazon DGX2 Facility

At the September 25th regular meeting of the Planning Commission, members gave feedback to Amazon regarding their presence in the Township and their proposed new facility at 4495 68th Street. Planning Commissioners expressed concerns about the lack of communication between the Township and Amazon officials, in addition to parking issues at the existing GRR1 facility; there have been recurring instances of third-party carriers and drivers that are not directly employed by Amazon parking improperly and littering on Rapids Drive. Kyle Schott of Ryan Companies explained that to mitigate communication issues, Kyle DeGiulio of Amazon is in attendance to answer questions and provide additional information.

Planner Wells inquired with DeGiulio specifically about the measures that have been put in place to address parking issues on Rapids Drive; DeGiulio responded that Amazon has modified the scheduling of pickups and drop offs and has opened the existing parking lot for truck traffic. Amazon has also began implementing systems to issue warnings, training, and suspensions to drivers that disobey the rules. DeGiulio noted that since implementing such precautions, suspensions have decreased and volume in the underused lot has significantly increased, reducing the impact to Rapids Drive.

DeGiulio also took some time to explain the Amazon ecosystem and the different purposes their facilities fulfill. The existing GRR1 facility is a robotics fulfillment center; a majority of their inventory is stored and packaged here, and GRR1 is the only facility in west Michigan that serves this purpose. The GRR5 building which has sat vacant since construction is intended to serve as a sortation facility, where trucks unload items to be sorted for regional delivery, in some cases heading to Ohio or Indiana. The proposed new DGX2 facility will be used to sort packages and load delivery vans prior to delivery.

Commissioner Haagsma expressed that he would like to determine what assurance there is that issues with truck parking on Rapids Drive will not become an issue again. Haagsma stated that the Kent County Road Commission does retain the right to revoke driveway permits if issues persist. Chair Giarmo inquired about placing a condition of approval on the site plan in which the underused lot must be dedicated to overflow parking for GRR1. Waayenberg and Wiersema noted that there are truck stops in the area that drivers could use to rest in between delivery jobs. Chair Giarmo suggested that Amazon build their own truck stop on site to manage the influx of truck traffic and the parking that such operations demand.

Planner Wells noted that staff does not have the capacity to monitor Rapids Drive on a regular basis, and that this is ultimately Amazon's burden to bear and mitigate. Wells said that the solution is either opening up the underutilized lot permanently for trailer usage or building a new parking lot. In either case if the trash issues persist, Amazon must be responsible for cleaning it up, since the Kent County Road Commission has been cleaning up the trash thus far.

Chair Giarmo inquired about whether Amazon could implement a security team to mitigate the issues; DeGiulio responded that Amazon does use security to monitor DOT numbers, and that Amazon is

working to monitor the situation remotely and ensure drivers who exhibit bad behavior face consequences.

Commissioner Billips inquired about whether there is any signage on Rapids Drive encouraging drivers to not park there; DeGiulio responded that upon arrival carriers are given pamphlets with maps that identify where to park and how to navigate the facility. DeGiulio also noted that Amazon has installed temporary signage to deter truck parking, and the challenge is getting the carrier companies on board with management and implementation of parking guidelines.

Wiersema inquired about the existing vacant GRR5 facility and the for-sale sign that was briefly on the property; DeGiulio responded that Amazon's real estate team is inconsistent with long term vs. short term thinking, and for a brief moment they thought that selling the asset made more sense; Amazon has since decided that keeping the building will be worthwhile.

Commissioner Rober inquired about disruptive truck traffic on 68th Street, to which DeGiulio responded that these issues don't make sense to him either and that he'd love to discuss these problems further and hopefully find a solution.

Planner Wells noted that staff didn't find any major deficiencies of the site plan and that all other standards for site plan review were satisfied. Staff did note, however, that a pedestrian connection from the facility to 68th Street was not included in the plans but could be worthwhile to include. Haagsma noted that Amazon did install sidewalk up to their driveway along the perimeter of the site and agreed that a pedestrian connection between the right-of-way and the facility would be preferable. Wiersema added that even though pedestrian connections may be underused currently, they could be vital in providing associates with adequate access in the future.

Planner Wells stated that he believes the solution is to build an additional parking lot, as he believes this will mitigate the issue and that drivers will actually use it. Wiersema said that if the solution is to require an additional parking lot to be built in the southeast corner of the site, visibility and screening should be appropriately managed and maintained at the corner of 68th Street and Patterson. Schott responded that the new lot would be approximately 200 feet from the 68th Street right-of-way which will help with minimizing visibility, and that Amazon would be willing to implement a berm and landscaping to buffer the view as well.

Waayenberg noted that the existing parking lot is not conducive to efficient truck parking and suggested that a new parking lot features pull-through parking and a loop to ensure tractor trailers can maintain adequate circulation. Schott responded that the layout is subject to change and their team is aiming to minimize any impact on designated wetlands.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Rober, to approve the site plan review for the Amazon DGX2 facility at 4495 68th Street with the following conditions:

1. The Planning Commission approves the parking overage, which is greater than 25% of the minimum parking required.
2. Signage shall be reviewed administratively.

3. Additional sidewalks and the pedestrian connection between the right-of-way and the facility shall be reviewed administratively.
4. Amazon must provide Township staff a monthly roster of contact information.
5. An additional parking lot must be created for the storage of tractor trailers, which must be compliant with all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
6. The applicant must secure all outside agency approvals (BGUA, KCDC, KCRC, EGLE)

DISCUSSION: None.

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

3. Items not requiring a Public Hearing

a. Prairie Wolf Landing Phase I and Phase II – Preliminary Major Condominium

Kelly Kuiper, the Manager of Land Planning and Entitlement for Eastbrook Homes explained that Eastbrook is seeking preliminary condominium approval for Phases I and II of Prairie Wolf Landing, which is a component of the Prairie Wolf Station Planned Unit Development (PUD). The submitted condominium plans are consistent with the plans approved as part of the overall PUD plan, and the detailed phase plans are consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Community Development Director Dan Wells noted that Phase I is the first row of single-family detached homes on the eastern border of the PUD, which includes 28 lots. Phase II features 80 single-family dwelling units; 14 detached site condominiums, 32 “terrace” homes, and 34 units of two-story townhouse buildings ranging from two to four homes per building. Phase II is intended to act as a transitional area between traditional single-family detached homes to the east and higher density apartments to the west, so as to gradually transition from lower to higher densities. Amendments to the Consent Judgement were recently approved by the Township Board of Trustees and will be reviewed by a judge in the coming months, although no proposed changes to the Consent Judgement have any bearing on either Phase I or II. Wells added that most infrastructure has been installed; Kuiper added that the lift station is in its final phases of installation as they await additional valves.

Commissioner Haagsma inquired about access drives and a timeline in which they will be built out, as Eastbrook must establish a second access point to build beyond 30 homes. Kuiper responded that the

Eastbrook team is working closely with Nederveld to ensure that the required number of access points will be installed in time. Wells added that additional building permits shall not be issued for anything in excess of 30 homes until the second connection point is made.

Kuiper stated that the goal is to begin construction on Phase I as soon as possible, and to have construction plans for Phase II by early 2026. Commissioner Haagsma said that he feels comfortable approving the requests with the assurance that building permits for additional homes may not be issued unless the required connections are installed.

Commissioner Wiersema inquired about the possibility of using the retention pond in the northeast corner of the site for recreational purposes. Kuiper responded that the intention was to make it a wet pond feature, however, the need for two large pipes has been eliminated due to stormwater requirements, meaning that the pond will be more like a marsh and will have the ability to sustain more wildlife and vegetation than if it was a wet feature. Kuiper also pointed out that there is a sidewalk connection to the pond, and it will be accessible to the public.

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Billips, to make a positive recommendation to the Township Board of Trustees for a preliminary major condominium for Phase I of Prairie Wolf Landing.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

MOTION: Motion by Waayenberg, supported by Haagsma, to make a positive recommendation to the Township Board of Trustees for a preliminary major condominium for Phase II of Prairie Wolf Landing.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

b. Dutton Center Phase II – Final Major Condominium

Chris Kohane, a Project Manager for Allen Edwin Homes, explained that Phase II of the Dutton Center PUD was originally proposed as a plat, but has since been approved to proceed as a condominium. Kohane noted that Allen Edwin has taken the necessary steps to obtain approval from the Township Engineer, Kent County Road Commission, Kent County Drain Commission, and EGLE. Kohane stated that the Byron Gaines Utility Authority is planning to begin earth work and construction within the next week.

Planner Wells stated that staff is recommending approval of the final condominium plan, given that the proposed layout is consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and the approved Dutton Center PUD plans. Wells noted that the roadways in this section of the development will connect to the Thornapple Farms plat to the south which will constitute as a secondary connection point and enable them to build more than 30 houses.

MOTION: Motion by Wiersema, supported by Waayenberg, to approve the final condominium plan for Phase II of the Dutton Center PUD with the condition that all requirements of the Township Engineer and Fire Department are satisfied.

DISCUSSION: None

AYES: ALL

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: None

DECISION: Motion Carried (6-0)

VII. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The Planning Commission discussed potential future development of a parcel to the west of Hillside Church, located at 1310 68th Street. The parcel is future zoned as Village Residential; the Planning Commission considered what kind of development may be permitted given the zoning designation and discussed the opportunity for Hillside Church to propose or otherwise be involved in development plans.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 PM.

CERTIFICATION:

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the October 23rd, 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,".

Lani Thomas,

Secretary

Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission

Date: November 20, 2025